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AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

STUDENT REPORT

LEYTE INVASION:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE
APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES OF WAR

MAJOR PAUL E. GRAZIANO 84-1055

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TITLE : LEYTE INVASION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE
APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES OF WAR

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Submitted to the faculty in partial fulfillment of
requirements for graduation.

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PREFACE

This study presents a comparative analysis of the application/non application of the 12 basic Principles of War, as contained in AFM 1-1, within the historic context of the October 1944 invasion of Leyte in the Philippines. It contains several sections which, because of sponsor guidance, are designed to stand alone. One section provides a detailed description of the events and circumstances of the invasion, the first week of ground operations, and the naval battle of Leyte Gulf which confirmed the success of the invasion. Another section provides a comprehensive analysis of the American and Japanese application/non application of each of the 12 principles. A third section provides discussion questions and associated responses for use in a seminar environment. Also included are several annotated maps and organizational charts which simplify comprehension of complex battle situations and conditions. Although these sections can stand alone, use of the entire package would contribute to optimum understanding of the invasion and the Principles of War in its context.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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AUTHOR(S): MAJOR PAUL E. GRAZIANO, USAF

TITLE : LEYTE INVASION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES OF WAR

I. Purpose: To present a comparative analysis of the application/non application of the 12 basic Principles of War, as contained in AFM 1-1, within the historic context of the Oct 1944 invasion of Leyte; also, to correlate adherence to these principles to success/failure in battle.

II. Problem: The Principles of War represent generally accepted major truths that are critical elements of success in warfare. However, in order to fully comprehend the meaning and criticality of these concepts, it is necessary to historically analyze their application/non application and the ensuing results. Leyte provides an excellent historic example for such an effort.

III. Data: Comprehensive analysis revealed the following concerning American/Japanese adherence to the principles.

Objective: Objective was a significant principle in this battle. For the most part, American objectives were well defined which led to a well executed invasion. The one exception, involving Halsey, was extremely significant and could have resulted in total defeat had Admiral Kurita not changed his mind at the last minute. The lack of well defined Japanese ground and naval objectives led to confusion. As a consequence, the Americans had an easy time securing the beachhead, and the Japanese suffered a disastrous naval defeat which doomed their efforts in the Philippines.

CONTINUED

Offensive: Offensive played a moderately important part at Leyte. The Americans afforded themselves the opportunity to thrust a long distance to attack an objective of their choosing. In key situations when their naval forces were attacked, they countered with highly aggressive offensive tactics which turned defeat into victory. On the other hand, the Japanese were forced to react to an American invasion at a location and time which was not known. Although attempting to repel the invasion with a spectacular naval offensive action, they failed to sustain the offensive and were, in the end, defeated.

Surprise: Surprise played a significant role in this battle for the Americans. The invasion caught the vastly outnumbered Japanese completely off guard and resulted in the easy establishment of a beachhead. Although the Japanese Fleet succeeded in surprising the American Seventh Fleet, their failure to capitalize on the situation negated its effect.

Security: Security played an important role at Leyte. The fact that the Americans, in general, practiced good security is not as important as the fact that the Japanese did not practice it. They failed to capitalize on an intelligence estimate that Leyte would be invaded, and they did not conduct basic reconnaissance to determine the formation and movement of the invasion force. Thus, they were totally surprised. During the naval battle, the Japanese provided virtually no intelligence to their fleet commanders, and they lacked basic communications. Consequently, the admirals knew little of the enemy situation; also, they knew almost as little of the status of the other Japanese fleets. This definitely contributed to defeat.

Mass: Mass was an important factor in this battle because the Americans, for the most part, massed forces, but the Japanese didn't. Their inability to mass ground forces and air power to defend Leyte resulted in the relatively easy American establishment of a beachhead. Failure to mass naval power against the vastly superior American Navy directly led to failure in the naval engagements. Because the significance of the battle required massive use of forces by both sides, economy of force was not a significant factor considered by either side.

Maneuver: Maneuver was an important factor in the naval clashes. The Americans consistently displayed skillfull maneuver. However, the Japanese, especially Admirals Nishimura and Kurita, ignored maneuver in key situations. This led to Nishimura's annihilation, and it contributed to Kurita's decision to break off an action which, in fact, he could have easily won.

CONTINUED

Timing: In the Author's opinion, timing and tempo were one of the two most significant factors in the battle at Leyte. With the exception of Halsey's return to San Bernardino Strait the Americans timed actions well. However, Japanese timing was horrendous. They first prematurely activated their most critical plan and wasted their precious air power. When they later reactivated the plan, they waited too long and delayed in tasking their navy. The timing of the advance of their surface fleets, which was so critical to success, was extremely sloppy. The cumulative effect of this poor timing was complete Japanese failure in their naval effort.

Unity: Unity of command is the second of two of the most critical factors in this battle. The Americans generally had a good command structure. The one exception, involving Third Fleet being under different command than the invasion force, nearly resulted in disaster. The fortune that prevented disaster does not reduce the criticality of this error. The Japanese, however, had fundamental shortfalls in interservice cooperation, organization of forces defending the Philippines, and command structure of the fleets tasked in the SHO Plan. These problems directly led to total Japanese defeat on Leyte and on the seas.

Simplicity: Simplicity becomes a significant factor in this battle only because the Japanese SHO Plan was excessively complex. The accurate intelligence and reliable communications necessary to successfully execute the plan were not available. This contributed to Japanese defeat.

Logistics: Logistics was an important factor at Leyte because the Japanese lacked the material to optimally defend the Philippines. Fuel shortages, the most significant limitation, forced their naval power to be separated and to act conservatively. This contributed to the fragmented naval advance on Leyte which ended in failure.

Cohesion: Cohesion was a significant factor because the Japanese had definite problems in this area. Ground forces defending Leyte were far from a crack combat unit. Nishimura's fleet was thrown together. Kurita's fleet was disgruntled and employed as less than a cohesive entity. This certainly adversely contributed to the desperate Japanese effort to dislodge the American invasion force from the Philippines.

IV. Conclusions: The Americans more stringently adhered to the Principles of War than did the Japanese. This directly contributed to American victory.

V. Recommendations: That this comparative analysis of the application of Principles of War, and the associated discussion questions and responses, be used in the ACSC curriculum on the subject.

SECTION ONE
BATTLE DESCRIPTION

CHAPTER ONE

SITUATION AND PLANNING

The purpose of the Leyte invasion was to secure a position which would separate the Japanese from needed support and to provide a staging base for further combat operations (3:1,2). This objective stems from the unique geographic location of the Philippines.

The Philippines lie athwart all sea routes south from Japan to the economically important Netherland Indies - rich in rubber, tin, oil and rice. The capture of the Philippines would help sever this line of communications...(3:2).

If these sea routes could be interdicted, Japanese access to critical raw materials and oil necessary to prosecute the war would be denied (3:46, 88-89). Further, the location of Leyte, if captured, would separate the Japanese held islands into two parts, with a strong American force between them. It would also serve as an excellent staging base for combat operations against China, Formosa, and Japan. Since the objective of the Joint Chief's strategic plan for the defeat of Japan was to secure unconditional surrender, an objective that might require the invasion of Japan, such a staging base would play a critical role (3:ix, 2). In addition to being a key military objective, Leyte was an excellent invasion point.

Leyte's geographic and physical characteristics were extremely

favorable for an amphibious invasion. Leyte, a natural gateway to the rest of the Philippines, would facilitate further operations in the island chain. It also possessed good beaches, an essential ingredient in amphibious operations. The shore line of Leyte Valley along Leyte Gulf provides the best landing beaches on Leyte, and Leyte Gulf itself is sufficiently large and open to accommodate the large number of ships required for the invasion (3:10-11). Although a lucrative invasion point, Leyte was not well defended.

American intelligence, prior to invasion, was able to formulate a reasonably accurate estimate of Japanese forces defending Leyte. Ground forces numbered approximately 21,700 troops consisting primarily of LGen Shiro Makino's 16th Division. Intelligence estimated that, under the most favorable conditions, only another five to eight regiments could be moved from neighboring islands to Leyte within the first two weeks after the invasion. The Americans estimated Japanese air strength opposing the invasion at 442 fighters and 337 bombers based at airfields throughout the Philippines. They anticipated the major naval threat to consist of a cruiser-destroyer task force, submarines, and torpedo boats. American intelligence believed deployment of the main Japanese fleet from home waters was doubtful (3:20, 22). An awesome American invasion force was assembled to attack these defenders.

The invasion force, commanded by General Douglas MacArthur, was the largest ever assembled in the Pacific Theater. His navy, the Seventh Fleet, commanded by Vice Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid, was

to transport the force to Leyte. It consisted of over 700 ships grouped into 3 task forces. Of these, 157 were combatant ships including 18 escort aircraft carriers (3:23, 41-42). Admiral William F. Halsey's Third Fleet, consisting of four powerful fast carrier groups, was not part of the invasion force, but had a supporting role (3:42, 17:75). Lt Gen Walter Krueger commanded the Sixth Army, the primary ground force, consisting of Lt Gen Franklin C. Sibert's X Corps and Maj Gen John R. Hodge's XXIV Corps. These two corps included about 104,500 troops. With reserve divisions and support elements, a total of about 202,500 ground troops were committed to the invasion. Lt Gen George C. Kenney commanded Allied Air Forces. However, navy carriers were to bear the brunt of furnishing air support in the early stages of the invasion (3:26-27). A detailed plan was generated to employ and coordinate this vast force.

King II, the tactical plan, was designed to rapidly seize and control the Leyte Gulf and Surigao Strait area in order to establish air, naval and logistics bases to support further operations into the Philippines. In preparation for the landing, underwater demolition teams were to clear the beaches before A-Day (invasion day) and destroy any obstacles. On 17 October, mine sweepers would begin clearing Leyte Gulf of floating mines. Also, on 17 October, elements of the Sixth Ranger Infantry Battalion would capture the small islands that guarded the entrance to Leyte Gulf. As soon as other ships could enter the harbor, a naval bombardment was to commence against airfields, gun emplacements, ammunition and fuel dumps, troops, beach defenses, and strong points. On 20 October, the Navy was to cover the approach of the transports and provide counter-battery fire (3:23, 30-31). This same day the major amphibious force (X and XXIV Corps) was to:

Attack and destroy hostile forces in the coastal strip Tacloban-Dulag inclusive, and to seize air-dromes and base sites therein; a rapid advance through Leyte Valley to seize and occupy the Capoccan-Carigara-Barugo area; and finally open San Juanico and Panaon Straits..." (3:33).

The 21st Infantry Regiment was to simultaneously land on the extreme southeast tip of Leyte and secure the entrance to Sogod Bay (3:33). Prior to and during the invasion, the Third Fleet, in support, was to contain or destroy the Japanese fleet, destroy enemy aircraft and shipping in the region, and provide direct air support for the invasion until Seventh Fleet escort carriers could assume this role (3:30-31). Unaware of the details of this plan, the Japanese devised their plan for the defense of the Philippines.

Although the Japanese expected an invasion of the Philippines, their defense plan (SHO) reflected the fact they had no clue of location or time. As a result, Japanese forces were spread throughout the Philippines with only one combat division, the 16th, on Leyte (3:46,52). Japanese further planned that the decisive Philippine land battle would be waged on Luzon since they believed that island to be the most important and easily defended in the Philippines. Only delaying actions would be fought anywhere else in the islands (5:47-48). Furthermore, Japanese higher headquarters instructed defending forces that the main battle was to be fought away from the beaches with only some troops left at the beaches to resist an American landing (3:52). The linchpin of the SHO Plan was the Japanese intent, as described in Chapter 3, to use a massive surface fleet, in conjunction with land based aircraft, to annihilate the American surface fleet and to wipe out the invasion convoy and troops at the landing point, within two days following the invasion (17:18). With this defense plan in effect, the Japanese met the American invasion on 20 October 1944.

CHAPTER TWO

THE INVASION BEACHHEAD

Preliminary activity in support of the invasion included securing key points, preparing the beach, and bombarding Japanese targets. At 0805 on 17 October, the Sixth Ranger Infantry Battalion secured the islands protecting Leyte Gulf with virtually no opposition. On the same day, minesweepers entered the Gulf and began clearing the waters. Beginning 18 October, underwater demolition teams confirmed that the landing beaches were not obstructed, and Seventh Fleet carrier planes attacked surrounding airfields on Cebu, Negros, and Panay Islands (Leyte airfields were not operating due to heavy rains), destroying 36 planes and damaging 28. On the evening of 19 October, the convoy entered the Gulf to begin bombarding beaches the next morning (3:45, 54-55, 57, 59).

The invasion force began an intense bombardment on the morning of 20 October. At 0600 on A-Day the battleships opened fire with the cruisers and destroyers moving in to commence shelling at 0900. At 0850, carrier planes began attacking with the first of over 500 sorties flown on A-Day. Targets included dispersal areas, supply dumps, bivouac areas, and airfields on nearby islands. At 0945 smaller vessels began raking the beaches with rocket and mortar fire in final preparation for actual troop landings (3:60-62).

In the X Corps area, the First Cavalry Division, under Maj Gen Vern D. Mudge, landed on White Beach meeting only light resistance. By the end of the day, the First Division had secured the Cataisan Peninsula and the Tacloban Airstrip and, after crossing Highway One, made contact with the 24th Division. The 24th Division, commanded by Maj Gen Frederick A. Irving, landed at Red Beach against heavy opposition and suffered many casualties. By the end of the day, it had crossed Highway One, secured Hill 552, which dominated the route to the interior, and captured Palo at the mouth of Leyte Valley (3:62-63, 65-72). X Corps had a 1 x 5 mile secure beachhead, and XXIV Corps had similar success.

In the XXIV Corps area, the 96th Division, under Maj Gen James L. Bradley, landed at Orange and Blue Beaches encountering intermittent heavy artillery fire and some ground resistance. Although falling short of their goal, they captured San Jose, established control of both sides of Labiranan River, captured Hill 20, overlooking the beach and progressed well inland. The Seventh Division, under Maj Gen Archibald V. Arnold, landed on Violet and Yellow Beaches against moderate to heavy resistance. By the end of the day, it had penetrated inland, 600 yards on the right and 2300 yards on the left, reaching the edge of Dulag Airstrip. XXIV Corps achieved a firm beachhead from San Jose south to below Dao, while the 21st Infantry Regiment fought its independent action 70 miles south (3:72, 74-78).

The 21st Infantry Regiment landed in the vicinity of Panaon Bay achieving its A-Day objective. It landed and secured the entrance to Sogod Bay encountering no Japanese resistance (3:78). These and

other American forces encountered surprisingly modest contact with the defending Japanese 16th Division.

The 16th Division, under General Makino, was operating according to the preconceived plan.

Most of the 16th Division had withdrawn during the naval and air bombardment, which took place just prior to the landing. The immediate invasion of the troops just after this pounding enabled the Americans to secure most of the coastal defenses before the enemy could regroup and return. As a consequence, the only Japanese forces encountered were those left behind to fight a delaying action (3:80).

The resulting establishment of a strong beachhead would contribute to success in the coming days.

During the first week of the land battle, all divisions made significant progress inland. The First Division struck north, seizing Tacloban and the land on both sides of San Juanico Strait. The 24th Division controlled a critical hill mass running northwest one mile inland, dominating Leyte Valley, secured Hill 552, took Palo, and opened the main road into Leyte Valley. The 96th Division captured Libiranan Head, isolated Catmon Hill, and were driving on the important supply center at Tabontabon. The Seventh Division took Dulag Airstrip and drove west toward Burauen, taking San Pablo Airstrip, Bayug Airstrip, Burauen, and Buri Airstrip (5:110-111, 114-115, 117-121). By 27 October, the opposition on the coast lightened.

General Makino, realizing that he could no longer prevent the loss of the coastal plain to the invaders, had directed most of his forces to fall back to positions in the mountains west of the Burauen Dagami Road (5:122).

Makino was unaware of the Japanese Headquarters' new position making Leyte the decisive land battle, so he fell back (5:122). As the invasion forces moved inland during the first week, most were unaware that the decisive action, a naval battle, was about to rage in Leyte Gulf.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NAVAL BATTLE WHICH SAVED THE BEACHHEAD

The decisive engagement in the Leyte invasion, a campaign which General MacArthur called "the crucial battle in the war in the Pacific" (17:12), was an attack by Japanese naval forces as prescribed in the SHO Plan.

The basic intention behind the SHO Plan was therefore to get this force (a strong surface fleet) into the most advantageous position; by which the enemy's high command meant one from which it could attack the landing forces plus their transports, supply ships, and close support units, as soon as possible after the invasion. Avoiding the attack of planes of the American task force, said the SHO Plan, (the)... force would 'Push forward and engage in a decisive battle with the surface force which tries to stop it. After annihilating this force, it will then attack and wipe out the enemy convoy and troops at the landing point.' The plan hoped that the big guns of...battleships would engage the weak amphibious forces within at least two days of the landing (17:18).

However, the Japanese did not possess effective carrier borne air support and they hoped to remedy this shortfall by use of land based air attacks (17:18).

The job of the shore based naval air forces would be first to strike against the enemy carriers; then 'two days before the arrival of our surface force they will thrust with all their strength on the carriers and transports to open the way for the first attack forces;' and finally, they would join with the naval forces and, incidentally, the Army Air Forces, in the assault on the transports and the troops on the beachhead (17:18).

The mission of air support was, therefore, purely offensive and would provide no cover for the surface fleet (17:18).

The Japanese naval force consisted of four separate surface fleets. Vice Admiral Takeo Kurita's Central Force consisted of five battleships, 10 heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and 15 destroyers (17:29). Because of the composition of the fleet and the fact that two of the battleships were equipped with mammoth 18 inch guns (17:39), this fleet was the major threat to the invasion force. The Southern-Van Force, commanded by Vice Admiral Shoji Nishimura, consisted of two battleships, one heavy cruiser, and four destroyers which were to complete a pincers with Kurita's force. Vice Admiral Kiyohide Shima's Southern-Rear Force which was to support Nishimura, included two heavy cruisers, one light cruiser, and four destroyers. Vice Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa's Northern Force consisted of two battleship-carriers, one large fleet carrier, three light carriers, and 10 destroyers (left behind were Japan's three latest large carriers and two older carriers) (17:29-30). Ozawa's mission was to act as a diversionary unit (17:19).

Further...there were definite indications that the carriers were regarded as expendable. They were to be committed even though it was admitted that their covering warships were 'not strong enough to screen the carriers' (17:19).

Opposing these four Japanese fleets were two strong American fleets.

The American naval force consisted of two independent fleets. Integral to General MacArthur's invasion force, was Vice Admiral Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet, consisting of over 700 ships (17:24). Of

these, 157 were combatant ships including 18 escort carriers, six old battleships, four heavy cruisers, four light cruisers, 30 destroyers and 10 destroyer escorts (3:41-42, 90). The Third Fleet was the second powerful American naval force. It was commanded by Admiral Halsey, who was subordinate to Admiral Chester W. Nimitz and, consequently, not an integral part of MacArthur's command (17:26). Third Fleet, whose mission was to provide support to MacArthur, consisted of Vice Admiral Marc Mitscher's Task Force 38, composed of four carrier groups, one each headed by Vice Admiral John McCain and Rear Admirals Gerald Bogan, Frederick Sherman, and Ralph Davison. McCain's group had been withdrawn for rest and reprovisioning. The remaining three groups consisted of five fleet carriers, six light carriers, six battleships, two heavy cruisers, seven light cruisers, and 44 destroyers (17:45-47, 75). "...Task Force 38 alone had the resources to cope with all the Japanese forces..." (17:47). Given this preponderance of American force, several events occurred which further worsened the situation for the Japanese.

The ability of the Japanese to successfully execute the SHO Plan was seriously complicated by premature commitment of forces and subsequent indecision to act. About one week prior to the invasion, the Japanese naval air forces engaged Third Fleet near Formosa and suffered extremely heavy losses. As part of this action, Admiral Soemu Toyoda, Commander of the entire Combined Fleet, ordered 150 carrier based planes from Admiral Ozawa's fleet to deploy to land bases and join in attacks against Halsey. Heavy losses of these

and other land based aircraft was serious since the air power which the Japanese hoped to employ to offset their carrier-borne air deficiencies was greatly diminished (17:19-23). Although willing to commit their air forces early off Formosa, the Japanese faltered in taking any naval surface force reaction following initial sightings of the invasion force early on 17 October (17:29).

Once again, however, the Japanese shortage of oil bedeviled them. Toyoda dared not commit his fleet immediately in case the operations reported should prove to be a feint...since if they were his ships thus committed prematurely would have to return due to shortage of fuel just when they would be needed most. Consequently, not until 1110, 18 October, when he was positive...the target really was Leyte, did Toyoda issue instructions for his forces to sail (17:29).

Kurita and Nishimura departed Lingga Roads; Shima sailed from Amami-O-Shima in the Ryukyus; and Ozawa deployed from the Inland Sea. Because of the long distances to be sailed, Kurita was forced to request a delay in engagement from the originally planned "invasion plus two days" to "invasion plus five days" on 25 October (17:29-31). This would provide MacArthur three additional days to secure the beach-head. The Japanese steamed toward Leyte where initial action would begin on 24 October.

The Japanese and American fleets made air and surface contact on 24 October. Vice Admiral Shigeru Fukudome's land based naval aircraft, along with the remainder of Ozawa's carrier assigned planes, attacked Halsey's Third Fleet and suffered heavy losses. The result, was the shattering of Japan's shore based air fleet and the negating of any effective role for these forces in the coming battle. Fukudome

had lost 120 aircraft with the American's losing only 10 (17:53-54, 58-59). The SHO objective, which tasked air assets to destroy sufficient shipping to clear the way for the surface fleets, was not even partially accomplished (5:143). Halsey's aircraft conducted attacks on the advancing Japanese surface fleets. He achieved poor results against Nishimura, broke contact, and struck at Kurita's main fleet (12:52). Following an intense battle resulting in the sinking of one battleship and the damaging of many more combatant vessels, Kurita retreated on a westerly course (17:61-65). However, this course was a short term maneuver accomplished to avoid afternoon air attacks in the confined San Bernardino Straits (5:149).

Kurita again turned about. His battered but still very powerful force with four battleships..six heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and 11 destroyers, seven hours behind schedule now headed back toward San Bernardino Strait (gateway to Leyte Gulf) at 20 knots (17:66).

Thus, after a day of intense air activity, Kurita, the main force, sailed toward his objective in Leyte Gulf; Nishimura and Shima steamed toward Surigao Strait, the other gateway to the Gulf; and Ozawa's decoy force sailed south to lure the Americans northward. This advance would be assisted by Halsey abandoning his block of San Bernardino Strait.

Admiral Halsey decided to abandon San Bernardino Strait, to advance northward, and to engage Ozawa's carrier force which was detected at 1640 on the 24th (17:67). Based on erroneous American pilot reports, Halsey believed Kurita's fleet to be severely mauled.

In a dispatch to MacArthur and Nimitz on the 25th, he reported that he believed the Central Force "had been so heavily damaged in the Sibuyan Sea that it could no longer be considered a serious menace to Seventh Fleet" (17:79). Based on this belief, and the stipulation in his operations plan that he destroy any enemy forces that appeared as well as protect the beachhead, Halsey turned his attention to Northern Force, just as the Japanese had planned (17:74). Halsey's decision, affected by his overestimation of the strength of Ozawa's force, was to attack with the entire Third Fleet and to leave San Bernardino Strait unguarded. Not knowing that Ozawa's carriers had few aircraft (5:209), Halsey believed, in his words, "he was 'rushing to intercept a force which gravely threatened not only Kinkaid and myself, but the whole Pacific strategy'" (5:200). At 2022 on 24 October, every ship in Halsey's command sailed north (17:82, 84). The door was now open for the Japanese to enter Leyte Gulf and to attack Admiral Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet. Prior to his decision, Halsey had considered splitting his fleet and even sent a dispatch concerning formation of Task Force 34 to deal with Kurita should he approach San Bernardino Strait (17:81). Although intended to be a preparatory indication of intentions, unclear wording caused Admirals Nimitz and Kinkaid to assume Task Force 34 was formed and guarding San Bernardino Strait. Further confusion occurred when Halsey radioed that he was proceeding with three groups north to attack enemy carriers. He meant to exclude McCain's group, previously resting, but now ordered separately to join the fray. For Kinkaid, who believed one group was now Task Force 34, this reinforced his belief that San Bernardino was being guarded by one group - Task Force

34 (17:84-85). With this assumption, Admiral Kinkaid's forces were about to do battle in Surigao Strait.

Believing San Bernardino was secure, Admiral Kinkaid decided to allocate almost his entire gunnery and torpedo strength to destroy the enemy as he transitted Surigao Strait. Accordingly, he ordered Rear Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf, Commander of the Bombardment and Support Group, to place his forces across the 12 mile wide stretch of water between Leyte and Hibuson where Surigao Strait enters Leyte Gulf. He added the cruisers and destroyers of Rear Admiral Russel Berkey's Close Covering Group to Oldendorf's command as further reinforcement. Only a screen of destroyer escorts and patrol craft were left to guard the supply and transport vessels in Leyte Gulf. Rear Admiral Thomas L. Sprague's escort carrier force was ordered to remain at their usual cruising stations to the east of the Gulf. Thus, American forces in Surigao consisted of six battleships, four heavy cruisers, four light cruisers, and 21 destroyers (17:93). Because of Kurita's delay in the Sibuyan Sea, Nishimura, trailed by Shima, 40 miles behind, would have to enter Leyte Gulf without the benefit of Kurita's jaw of the pincers. Their forces consisted of two battleships, three heavy cruisers, one light cruiser, and eight destroyers. Their forces were, however, under separate command, unaware of each other's location, and not communicating (17:96-98). At 2252, battle commenced with American PT boat attacks followed by destroyer torpedo attacks at 0300 (17:99, 105).

Despite these consistent blows, however,
Nishimura with undeniable courage, but also

with a singular lack of skill, doggedly called on his ships...to attack anything they might meet. He did not even try to take advantage of the protection of either shore but stuck to the middle of the strait. Nor did he signal the course of events to Shima (17:108).

At 0351, Oldendorf opened fire simultaneously with full broadsides on the Japanese ships while steering across the head of their column. They could fire only their front guns. All but one of Nishimura's vessels were sunk and the Admiral went down with his ship (17:108, 110, 115, 121). Unaware of the debacle, Shima pressed forward. Upon reaching the battle area and surveying the situation, he fired 16 torpedoes which missed; had one of his cruisers collide with one of Nishimura's vessels; and finally changed course and retreated to the safety of the Mindanao Sea (17:116-117). Nishimura and Shima were soundly defeated. In his own words, Shima believed that by continuing north "...it was quite clear that we should only fall into a ready trap" (5:164).

'A perfect ambush and an almost flawless attack' was how Admiral Nimitz described their (Oldendorf and Kinkaid) achievement. It was gained moreover at the cost of only a handful of lives, damage to one destroyer and the loss of one PT boat. Nobody knows how many Japanese died that night, it may have been well over 5,000 (17:121).

Although the Surigao Strait operation was a tremendous American success, action of Cape Engano would be less satisfactory from an American perspective.

The encounter between Halsey and Ozawa off Cape Engano resulted in a successful lure of Third Fleet northward with little cost to the Japanese. Ozawa, currently possessing 17 ships and only 29

planes, maneuvered his fleet to lure Halsey as far from San Bernardino as possible. Pursuing him were Admiral Mitscher's three task groups, consisting of 65 ships (with six battleships, five fleet carriers, five light carriers) and 786 combat aircraft. Also, Admiral Mc Cain's group was proceeding to rendezvous possessing three fleet carriers, two light carriers, and other vessels (17:71, 122-123). On the morning of 25 October, Halsey's forces launched air attacks on Ozawa's fleet which continued throughout the morning. At 0822, Kinkaid advised Halsey that Seventh Fleet escort carriers were under Japanese surface attack. Halsey, 350 miles north of Leyte Gulf, the scene of this encounter, took no action to dispatch forces south. Instead, he requested Mc Cain, further away than Halsey, to proceed to assist Kinkaid. Halsey continued north to attack Ozawa despite continued pleas from Kinkaid. At 1000 Admiral Nimitz requested disposition of Task Force 34. Clearly a prod, this angered Halsey who, at 1100, ordered Task Force 34, (now formed) to proceed southward to aid Kinkaid. Prior to the departure of Task Force 34, Halsey caused further delay by restructuring the composition of this task force. Halsey then split Task Force 34, as recomposed, in two, with one half traveling southward faster than the other. Halsey's fleet was now split into three parts plus Mc Cain's group (17:126, 129-134).

In fact, the final result of Halsey's decisions was that the Third Fleet, with a strength in fire power greater than that of the entire Japanese Navy, found itself outgunned in the north and outgunned in the south (17:134).

Even if Halsey had immediately sent forces south, he could not have assisted the fleet, but he could have blocked Kurita's escape through San Bernardino. However, due to his splitting of his fleet, it is fortunate that Halsey was unable to arrive in time to block the Strait (17:133-134). Of the Ozawa force, victim of air and surface attack, two battleships, two light cruisers, and six destroyers survived (17:140-142). Ozawa's portion of the plan was a success.

Not only did he give Kurita a splendid chance of success, he even managed to extricate the larger portion of his own decoy force (17:142).

Ozawa lost four carriers (with few planes), one cruiser, and two destroyers. Similar results were not to occur for Kurita off Samar Island.

Admiral Kurita, undetected, sped through San Bernardino Strait and headed south toward Leyte Gulf to attack the invasion force (17:89). Between Kurita and his objective were the slow unarmored escort carriers of Rear Admiral Thomas Sprague which at the time were further weakened by being divided into three groups. His own Taffy One, consisting of four escort carriers, three destroyers, and four destroyer escorts, was located 90 miles southeast of Sulvan Island. Rear Admiral Felix Stump's Taffy Two, consisting of six escort carriers, three destroyers, and four destroyer escorts, was 100 miles north, off the entrance to Leyte Gulf. Admiral Clifton Sprague's Taffy Three, consisting of six escort carriers, three destroyers, and four destroyer escorts, was steaming north off central Samar. Key is the fact that these forces were not designed for heavy surface warfare. Their role was beachhead

support with integral anti-submarine protection (17:144-146). Kurita completely surprised Taffy Three and "...Sprague was given virtually no chance to prepare for the incredible action he would have to fight" (17:148). According to Kurita,

We planned first to cripple the carriers ability to have planes take off and land, and then mow down the entire task force (17:151).

In his haste to cripple the carriers, Kurita failed to form his force into a powerful, cooperating battle line, and he ordered general attack permitting each individual vessel to take independent action against Taffy Three (17:151).

In contrast to Kurita's lack of control, Sprague ...kept a firm grip on events...turned his ships due east which was sufficiently into the wind to allow planes to be launched while at the same time it avoided closing toward the Japanese more than was necessary (17:152).

The first shots were fired at about 0700 on 25 October (17:152) as Taffy Three fled in a southeasterly direction staying between Kurita and Leyte Gulf (5:176). Annihilation of Taffy Three was prevented by a sudden rain squall which afforded concealment, air/destroyer/destroyer escort attacks which forced the Japanese to take evasive action, and the inability of Kurita to regain control of his forces taking independent action (17:153-154, 162-164). The arrival of aircraft support from Taffy Two further aggravated Kurita's advance (17:172). Just when it seemed Taffy One, Taffy Two, and Leyte Gulf would be Kurita's victims, the entire Japanese force responded to a message from Kurita at 0911 and reversed course northward (17:177).

The failure of the main body and encircling forces to completely wipe out all vessels of this task unit, reported Sprague later, 'can be attributed to our successful smoke screen, our torpedo counter

attack, continuous harassment of the enemy by bomb, torpedo and strafing air attacks, timely maneuvers, and the definite partiality of Almighty God'(17:177).

However, Kurita's reversal was due to factors beyond the partiality of Almighty God.

Why did Kurita break off the action, reverse course, and not re-engage Taffy Three?

There seems to be no argument from any responsible Japanese Officer that the first decision to break off the pursuit of Clifton Sprague, resulted from Kurita having lost control of the ships under his command which had become widely scattered as the fighting progressed with Yamato (Kurita's Flagship) lagging at the rear of the chase (17:179).

Kurita overestimated Sprague's speed, and, because of poor communication, never realized how near his force was to finishing Taffy Three. Kurita also feared air attack, and he wanted to consolidate his force to improve his air defense umbrella. However, it took three hours for his remaining four battleships, two heavy cruisers, two light cruisers and half dozen destroyers to regroup. During this period, Kurita believed the carriers, which he believed to be fleet vice escort types, had also regrouped and would soon mount devastating air strikes. Also, during this period, Kurita received a transmission from the only surviving vessel of Nishimura's fleet revealing the magnitude of the debacle involving Southern Force. He would have no help from the southern portion of the pincers. Although Kurita later denied this influenced his decision, Rear Admiral Tomiji Koyanagi, his Chief of Staff, claims it did (17:178-180). "...It is inconceivable that it did not influence him" (17:180).

Also, he was unaware of Ozawa's success, and he feared that Halsey and Gildendorf were closing on him (17:182). Fearing more attacks if he neared and entered Leyte Gulf, Kurita stated:

'I couldn't use the advantage that ships had of maneuvering whereas I would be a more useful force under the same attack with the advantage of maneuver in the open sea'...thus...partly from what he knew, but still more from what he imagined, Kurita reached the conclusion that his prospects in Leyte Gulf were both thin and grim and that he had better save the rest of his fleet, possibly to fight another day (17:182).

These prospects were supplemented by Kurita's nagging suspicion that most of the invasion vessels in Leyte Gulf would have withdrawn by this late date (5:192). At 1236, the decisive moment of the battle, Kurita decided to reverse course. With the objective of transiting San Bernardino and sailing as far to the west as possible to avoid air attacks which did pound him in his retreat, at 2140, Kurita entered San Bernardino Strait and escaped (17:182-185, 187). The decision to not enter Leyte Gulf had phenomenal impact.

Kurita's decision caused the complete failure of the SHO Plan. According to LGen Krueger, Commander of Sixth Army, had the plan succeeded, his invasion Army would have been isolated and placed in a very dangerous situation (12:165). This is echoed by General MacArthur who states:

Should the enemy gain entrance to Leyte Gulf his powerful naval guns could pulverize any of the eggshell transports present in the area and destroy vitally needed supplies on the beachhead. The thousands of US troops ashore would have been isolated and pinned down helplessly between enemy fire from the ground and sea. Then, too, the schedule for supply reinforcement would not only be completely upset, but the success of the invasion itself would be placed in jeopardy (13:263).

Although some historians, such as J. A. Field, contend that

the impact of Kurita on 6th Army would be less than that estimated by Krueger and MacArthur (5:214), it is difficult to ignore the views of the senior invasion commanders. However, this is all speculation. In the battle of Leyte Gulf the Japanese lost three battleships, one fleet carrier, three light carriers, six heavy cruisers, four light cruisers, and nine destroyers. The US lost only one light carrier, two escort carriers, two destroyers, and one destroyer escort. More importantly, Kurita never reached the invasion force. SHO failed. This ensured the American conquest of the Philippines and was the death of the Japanese Navy and Japan (17:209-210). Admiral Mitsumasa Yonai, the Japanese Navy Minister in October 1944, stated:

Our defeat at Leyte was tantamount to the loss of the Philippines. When you took the Philippines, that was the end of our resources (17:210).

Thus, the victory in Leyte Gulf ensured success of the Leyte invasion which was satisfactorily progressing ashore.

SECTION TWO

ANALYSIS OF THE APPLICATION OF
AFM 1-1 PRINCIPLES OF WAR

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This section analyzes the American and Japanese application and violation of the 12 basic Principles of War, as outlined in AFM 1-1, within the context of the Leyte invasion in World War II. Each principle is treated separately except mass and economy of force which, because they are so closely related, are treated together. Each analytical treatment is in the same format. First, the author includes a direct quote from AFM 1-1 which describes the Principle of War. Following the quote, the author lists individual examples of American application/violation of the particular principle addressed in that chapter. The same is then done for the Japanese. Following the American and Japanese examples, the author concludes with a summary of the relevance of US and Japanese actions to the outcome of the battle. However, why study the battle at Leyte?

Leyte is a particularly good historical example whose "history could serve as a textbook on the art of war" (6:VIII). Occurring in 1944, it is a fairly recent battle which can very easily be related to warfare today. Also, it was an engagement, largest in the Pacific War, which involved large quantities of ground, air, and naval forces. We can expect similar battles today. Finally, because it was the decisive battle of the Pacific War, it provides an extremely interesting historical example to analyze in an effort to assess the criticality of the Principles of War. The following are the results of this analysis.

OBJECTIVE

The most basic principle for success in any military operation is a clear and concise statement of a realistic objective. The objective defines what the

military action intends to accomplish and normally describes the nature and scope of an operation. An objective may vary from the overall objective of a broad military operation to the detailed objective of a specific attack. The ultimate military objective of war is to neutralize or destroy the enemy's armed forces and his will to fight. However, the intimate bond which ties war to politics cannot be ignored. War is a means to achieving a political objective and must never be considered apart from the political end. Consequently, political imperatives shape and define military objectives. It follows that the objective of each military operation must contribute to the overall political objective. Success in achieving objectives depends greatly on the knowledge, strategy, and leadership of the commander. The commander must ensure that assigned forces are properly used to attain the objective. This requires that objectives be disseminated and fully understood throughout all appropriate levels of command. Clear and concise statements of objective greatly enhance the ability of subordinates to understand guidance and take appropriate actions. For aerospace operations, the commander develops his broad strategy based on the primary objective, mindful of the capabilities of friendly forces (both man and machine), the capabilities and actions of the enemy, the environment, and sound military doctrine. Broad strategies derived from this combination of factors form the basis for selecting targets, means of attack, tactics of employment, and the phasing and timing of aerospace attacks. Always, the primary measure of success is employing aerospace forces in achieving the objective through knowledgeable use of men and their machines (1:2-4, 2-5).

American Example:

The objective of the Leyte invasion, as a major operation, was specifically defined. It was to establish an air and logistical base to support further operations in the Luzon/Formosa and China coast area and, eventually, Japan. As a collateral benefit, a success on Leyte would sever Japan from its source of natural resources in Southeast Asia (3:IX, 1-3).

A-Day objectives for each division were very clear. The First Division was to seize Tacloban and its air strip and secure San Juanico Strait. The 24th was to seize San Paolo and press into Leyte Valley. The 96th was to secure Highway One, Catmon Hill, and the Dagami-Tanauan area. The Seventh was to seize the bridge and crossings of the Daguitan River at Dao and to capture the town of Burauen. Each division knew exactly what was expected of them (3:33).

One shortfall in American objectives involved Admiral Halsey's primary task during the invasion. In addition to tasking him for support of the beachhead, his operations plan stated that "... if a chance to destroy a major portion of the Japanese fleet was offered or could be created then this would become the Third fleet's primary task" (5:77). In fact, although Admiral Kinkaid believed Third Fleet's task was to protect Seventh Fleet amphibious shipping (16:112), Admiral Halsey later said "it was not my job to protect Seventh Fleet" (16:122). This conflict in objectives directly contributed to Halsey abandoning San Bernardino Strait and chasing Admiral Ozawa who he believed was a strong force converging with other Japanese fleets on Leyte Gulf (7:216). The action placed the invasion force at great risk.

JAPANESE EXAMPLE:

The Japanese changed their objective at the most inopportune time. The original decisive battle for the defense of the Philippines was to be fought on Luzon with only delaying actions fought

elsewhere (5:48). When it was evident that Leyte was the invasion site, the Japanese, on the evening of 18 October, altered the objective to make Leyte the decisive Philippine land battle. The only problem was that General Makino, Commander of the 16th Division defending Leyte, didn't find out until at least one week following the invasion. By this time, he had decided to retreat into the hills to fight a delaying action (5:86, 122). Consequently, it was much easier for the Americans to secure a beachhead and make rapid advances.

Ground forces in the Philippines were not given a clear-cut objective. Two philosophies of defense included annihilation at the beachhead and resistance in depth. As a compromise, LGen Sosaku Suzuki, the 35th Army Commander, stated that "...although the main battle was to be fought away from the beaches, some troops should remain to resist the American landings..." (3:52). This ambivalence in objective became significant during the early days of the invasion. Following 35th Army orders, General Makino abandoned the coastal plain to fight in the mountains. He was unaware of a late change in Japanese direction requiring that forward positions be held (5:122). This lack of knowledge contributed to his decision to fight a delaying action, and it helped the Americans to quickly secure the beachhead.

Admiral Shima, one half of the Naval Southern Force was never given a clearcut objective. At the late date of 21 October he received his third change of orders in a week. He was told, "it is

deemed advisable (for you)...to storm the Leyte Gulf from the south through Surigao Strait and cooperate with (Kurita).." (11:140). Further complicating this situation was the fact that he didn't even know the role or objectives of Admiral Nishimura, the other half of Southern Force (17:51). This would directly contribute to a Japanese debacle in Surigao Strait.

Evidence indicates that in addition to raising havoc in Leyte Gulf, Kurita's orders gave him the optional objective of engaging enemy carrier task forces, if the opportunity arose (16:129).

...There had been discussions about what the fleet should do if it encountered a powerful enemy task force. Should the penetration of Leyte Gulf be abandoned to engage the enemy? Kurita's Chief of Staff...had raised the question at the end of August when Capt Shigenori Kami, a Combined Fleet staff officer, had brought the SHO operations plans to a battle conference in Manila. Capt Kami answered affirmatively. The ranking officers of the Southwest Area Fleet agreed saying...that the engagement of an enemy task force took precedence over all other considerations (11:160).

If Admiral Kurita did, indeed, abandon Leyte Gulf to attack a carrier force to the north as some contend(11:160, 6:126), this conflicting navy objective could have influenced his decision to abandon the basic objective of the SHO Plan.

Summary:

Objective was a significant principle in this battle. For the most part, American objectives were well defined which led to a well executed invasion. The one exception, involving Halsey, was extremely significant and could have resulted in total defeat had Admiral Kurita not changed his mind at the last minute. The lack of well defined Japanese ground and naval objectives led to

confusion. As a consequence, the Americans had an easy time securing the beachhead, and the Japanese suffered a disastrous naval defeat which doomed their efforts in the Philippines.

OFFENSIVE

Unless offensive action is initiated, military victory is seldom possible. The principle of offensive is to act rather than react. The offensive enables commanders to select priorities of attack, as well as the time, place, and weaponry necessary to achieve objectives. Aerospace forces possess a capability to seize the offensive and can be employed rapidly and directly against enemy targets. Aerospace forces have the power to penetrate to the heart of an enemy's strength without first defeating defending forces in detail. Therefore, to take full advantage of the capabilities of aerospace power, it is imperative that air commanders seize the offensive at the very outset of hostilities (1:2-5).

American Example:

The Leyte invasion, because it was to seize an island to be used for further thrusts against the Japanese, was a pure offensive (3:1).

Admiral Sprague's Taffy Three responded to a surprise attack by Admiral Kurita with firm offensive action. Sprague launched all available planes from his carriers and conducted intense air attacks on Kurita's ships. He supplemented these with concentrated torpedo attacks conducted by destroyers and destroyer escorts. These forced Kurita's vessels to repeatedly alter course and to take evasive action which further degraded the effectiveness of Kurita's attack. This also contributed to Kurita's decision to break off action (17: 153-155, 162, 164).

Japanese Example:

The very nature of the SHO Plan for defense of the Philippines was defensive vice offensive and represented a fundamental change in tactics. Instead of positive strategies, they were forced by their dire straits to adopt a negative, reactive strategy to counter an invasion whose time and location were unknown (5:44). It was a plan of desperation to defend the homeland (18:15,16).

Admiral Kurita's mission to fight his way through defending forces and attack the invasion beachhead in Leyte Gulf was spectacularly offensive, but he failed to sustain the effort. After he broke off contact with Taffy Three and regrouped his forces, his fleet wandered aimlessly for 3 hours. Following this period of deliberation, Kurita decided to abandon his offensive objective of proceeding through Leyte Gulf to attack the beachhead. He retreated through San Bernardino Strait, and he ensured the Japanese loss of the Philippines (17:17(), 183). Kurita's hesitation and retreat were the most critical factors in bringing about the ultimate destruction of the Japanese Navy (17:211).

Summary:

Offensive played a moderately important part at Leyte. The Americans afforded themselves the opportunity to thrust a long distance to attack an objective of their choosing. In key situations when their naval forces were attacked, they countered with highly aggressive offensive tactics which turned defeat into victory. On the other hand, the Japanese were forced to react to an

American invasion at a location and time which was not known. Although attempting to repel the invasion with a spectacular naval offensive action, they failed to sustain the offensive and were in the end, defeated.

SURPRISE

Surprise is the attack of an enemy at a time, place and manner for which the enemy is neither prepared nor expecting an attack. The principle of surprise is achieved when an enemy is unable to react effectively to an attack. Surprise is achieved through security, deception, audacity, originality, and time execution. Surprise can decisively shift the balance of power. Surprise gives attacking forces the advantage of seizing the initiative while forcing the enemy to react. When other factors influencing the conduct of war are unfavorable, surprise may be the key element in achieving the objective. The execution of surprise attacks can often reverse the military situation, generate opportunities for air and surface forces to seize the offensive, and disrupt the cohesion and fighting effectiveness of enemy forces. Surprise is a most powerful influence in aerospace operations, and commanders must make every effort to attain it. Surprise requires a commander to have adequate command, control, and communication to direct his forces, accurate intelligence information to exploit enemy weaknesses, effective deception to divert enemy attention, and sufficient security to deny an enemy sufficient warning and reaction to a surprise attack (1:2-5).

American Example:

The American invasion at Leyte achieved a complete strategic surprise of major proportions (14:460, 15:32). When the invasion ships arrived in Leyte Gulf on 18 October, the Japanese defenders believed they were merely seeking refuge from a storm or perhaps attempting to repair battle damage (3:53). This is somewhat surprising considering that Japanese intelligence had accurately predicted that Leyte would be invaded in the last 10 days of October (17:14).

Japanese Example:

Admiral Kurita's transit of San Bernardino Strait and subsequent attack on Admiral Sprague's Taffy Three represented a surprise which caught the Americans "flat footed" (15:10). Lack of warning gave Sprague absolutely no time to prepare for the action (17:147-148). Had Kurita not broken off action, Taffy Three would have likely been wiped out, and Leyte Gulf would have been next.

Summary

Surprise played a significant role in this battle for the Americans. The invasion caught the vastly outnumbered Japanese completely off guard and resulted in the easy establishment of a beachhead. Although the Japanese Fleet succeeded in surprising the American Seventh Fleet, their failure to capitalize on the situation negated its effect.

SECURITY

Security protects friendly military operations from enemy activities which could hamper or defeat aerospace forces. Security is taking continuous, positive measures to prevent surprise and preserve freedom of action. Security involves active and passive defensive measures and the denial of useful information to an enemy. To deny an enemy knowledge of friendly capabilities and actions requires a concerted effort in both peace and war. Security protects friendly forces from an effective enemy attack through defensive operations and by masking the location, strength, and intentions of friendly forces. In conducting these actions, air commanders at all levels are ultimately responsible for the security of their forces. Security in aerospace operations is achieved through a combination of factors such as secrecy, disguise, operational security, deception, dispersal, maneuver, timing, posturing, and the defense and hardening of forces. Security is enhanced by establishing an

effective command, control, communications, and intelligence network. Intelligence efforts minimize the potential for enemy actions to achieve surprise or maintain an initiative, and effective command, control, and communications permit friendly forces to exploit enemy weaknesses and respond to enemy actions (1:2-5).

American Example:

The Americans, by virtue of the complete surprise achieved by the Leyte Invasion (14:460), maintained good security. Any significant leaks during planning and surface transport of the invasion force would likely have resulted in some Japanese awareness of the time/location of the invasion. There is no evidence to this effect.

The American position was greatly enhanced by the availability of quality intelligence on the Japanese forces defending the Philippines (15:30). According to Rear Admiral Daniel E. Barbey, a Task Force commander:

We received excellent information about Japanese troop strength and beach defenses from Filipino guerrillas with whom allied intelligence kept in touch by submarine and radio. It was a very satisfying feeling and one of great relief to be able to plan with some certainty as to what might be expected at the landing beaches (2:235).

Good intelligence is a great way to prevent surprise and improve security.

Admiral Kinkaid displayed a keen awareness of security immediately following Admiral Kurita's surprise attack on Taffy Three. He did not order Admiral Oldendorf north to assist the Taffy carrier groups. Instead, he dispatched some vessels to assist the groups and positioned Admiral Oldendorf in a location where he could protect the eastern

entrance to Leyte Gulf as well as Surigao Strait. Kinkaid was well aware that Admiral Shima's fleet was intact and could still penetrate Surigao Strait if it were unguarded (17:157).

The Americans displayed poor security following Admiral Halsey's abandonment of San Bernardino Strait. Instead of maintaining one vessel on picket duty at the strait, every ship sailed north (17:84). This permitted Admiral Kurita's Central Force to enter completely undetected and, consequently, completely surprise Seventh Fleet (17:147).

The Americans did lack some critical intelligence. For example, intelligence did not know that Ozawa's carriers had so few planes. They also did not know the tremendous difficulties the Japanese were having rebuilding the deteriorated air groups and training new pilots (18:132). Had this information been available, Admiral Halsey may not have doggedly sped after Ozawa.

Japanese Example:

The Japanese were attempting to predict the time and place of the Philippine invasion in order to prevent being surprised. Japanese intelligence estimated that the major landings would take place on Leyte sometime during the last 10 days of October (17:14). There is no explanation why the Japanese leadership did not heed these warnings, but the result was complete surprise at Leyte.

The Japanese failed to collect intelligence which would have provided tactical warning of a forthcoming invasion. Had they conducted proper reconnaissance, they might have detected the assembly

of the vast armada off Hollandia. If so, they could have activated SHO as early as 10 October instead of on the night of 17/18 October when the American forces began preliminary operations in Leyte Gulf (11:111).

Japanese naval forces received surprisingly little intelligence prior to, or during, their action in this battle. Before departing Borneo, Kurita was provided intelligence estimating that the American force consisted of 200 transports, seven battleships, and an appropriate number of cruisers and destroyers in Leyte Gulf (9:127). He would receive little more as he neared the Philippines. Air assets, seen snooping everywhere, didn't give the Japanese Admirals even the rudimentary intelligence they desperately needed (9:296). The only report received by Kurita during the whole operation involved disposition of US ships in Leyte Gulf. This information was gathered by Admiral Nishimura's only scout plane on 24 October (11:135, 136). This undoubtedly contributed to his decision to break off action with that force. He also had no intelligence on the status of American airstrips, the enemy situation resulting from combat with Northern and Southern Forces, or the actual location of Third Fleet (18:202, 203). This led him to overestimate the threat and to withdraw. Without intelligence, a commander is blind, and he is fundamentally less effective.

The Japanese also lacked effective communications to coordinate their actions to exploit enemy weakness. Although examples abound, the most striking is Admiral Ozawa's inability to inform Kurita

of his successful luring of Third Fleet northward (18:233). Had Kurita known this, it is conceivable he would have pressed toward Leyte Gulf rather than retire through San Bernardino Strait.

Summary:

Security played an important role at Leyte. The fact that the Americans, in general, practiced good security is not as important as the fact that the Japanese did not practice it. They failed to capitalize on an intelligence estimate that Leyte would be invaded, and they did not conduct basic reconnaissance to determine the formation and movement of the invasion force. Thus, they were totally surprised. During the naval battle, the Japanese provided virtually no intelligence to their fleet commanders, and they lacked basic communications. Consequently, the admirals knew little of the enemy situation; also, they knew almost as little of the status of the other Japanese fleets. This definitely contributed to defeat.

MASS AND ECONOMY OF FORCE

Success in achieving objectives with aerospace power requires a proper balance between the principles of mass and economy of force. Concentrated firepower can overwhelm enemy defenses and secure an objective at the right time and place. Because of their characteristics and capabilities, aerospace forces possess the ability to concentrate enormous decisive striking power upon selected targets when and where it is needed most. The impact of these attacks can break the enemy's defenses, disrupt his plan of attack, destroy the cohesion of his forces, produce the psychological shock that may thwart a critical enemy thrust, or create an opportunity for friendly forces to seize the offensive. Concurrently, using economy of force permits a commander to execute attacks with appropriate mass at the critical time and place without wasting resources on secondary objectives. War will always involve the

determination of priorities. The difficulty in determining these priorities is directly proportional to the capabilities and actions of the enemy and the combat environment. Commanders at all levels must determine and continually refine priorities among competing demands for limited aerospace assets. This requires a balance between mass and economy of force, but the paramount consideration for commanders must always be the objective. Expending excessive efforts on secondary objectives would tend to dissipate the strength of aerospace force and possibly render them incapable of achieving the primary objective. Economy of force helps to preserve the strength of aerospace forces and retain the capability to employ decisive firepower when and where it is needed most (1:2-6).

American Example:

The invasion ground force was structured to bring superior mass against the Japanese defenders on Leyte (13:249). Over 202,000 ground troops were committed to battle the Japanese 16th Division, estimated to consist of about 21,000 men, which defended Leyte (3:22,26). Although the Japanese would reinforce, the American force was vastly larger than the opposition.

The overall US mass superiority was somewhat diminished by the wide separation of the landing beaches of X and XXIV Corps caused by the maneuver needs of the invasion ships. This separate landing plus the separation of the principle objectives of these corps along divergent lines precluded mutual corps support. However, this factor did not prove significant (12:150).

In defending Surigao Strait from the advance of Admirals Nishimura and Shima, Admiral Kinkaid massed almost his entire gunnery and torpedo strength to destroy, vice repluse, the enemy. In addition to Admiral Oldendorf's Bombardment and Support Group, he

placed Admiral Berkey's cruisers and destroyers of his Close Covering Group across the 12 mile wide strait. This combined force was more than sufficient to soundly defeat the Japanese Fleet attempting to penetrate Surigao Strait (17:92-93).

The Seventh Fleet effectively massed air attacks to defend Taffy Three from Kurita's powerful fleet.

Every torpedo plane, bomber, and fighter that could get aloft was over the Japanese warships, hitting them, in Clifton Sprague's words, 'with everything in the armory including the door knobs' (5:185).

This massed power was directly responsible for Kurita breaking off his attack.

Halsey's restructuring of Third Fleet as he sped south to San Bernardino Strait violated the principle of mass. First, he formed Task Force 34 to go south leaving the remainder of Third Fleet in the north. Second, he split task force 34 in two with one part traveling faster than the other. The final result was that Third Fleet, more powerful than the entire Japanese Navy, was so fragmented that it was outgunned everywhere. It is fortunate that Halsey was too late to engage Kurita(17:134).

Japanese Example:

The Japanese were unable to mass any forces to defend the Philippines. This was caused by the fact that, although in mid-1944 they expected an invasion of the Philippines, they had no idea of timeframe or location (3:49). Only the 16th Division would be available to defend Leyte on A-Day (3:52).

The Japanese also failed to use the principle of mass in the tasking of air attacks during the early part of the invasion. According to LGen Krueger, Commander of Sixth Army, "instead of making mass attacks on Tacloban Air Strip - our only operating field for some weeks - they made piecemeal raids with which our limited number of fighter planes were able to cope" (12:165). The ability of the Japanese to mass air power was significantly reduced by strict assignment of roles. Naval aviation was to attack shipping at sea. Army aviation was to attack targets on, or near, the beachhead (6:18). This arrangement precluded the flexibility to mass airpower, as was required during the naval engagements.

The Japanese failed to mass their naval forces to maximize their effectiveness in the Leyte Gulf operation. Although they had committed virtually every fighting ship in the Imperial Navy, forces were split among Admirals Kurita, Nishimura, and Shima with Ozawa conducting a diversion from the north (18:1). "Had Nishimura remained with Kurita, and had Shima joined them, the combined force would have been a truly powerful unit, unlikely to be defeated as it was..." (5:166). This was a fatally weak and defective allocation of forces for such a critical mission (4:306).

The Japanese failed to mass available assets in employing Southern Force in Surigao Strait. The fleets of Admirals Nishimura and Shima were separate entities, physically separated by 40 miles, and they were not communicating. Their attacks and operations were totally uncoordinated (17:97,98, 5:132). If massed into a single operating unit, they certainly would have been a more formidable force at Surigao Strait.

Summary:

Mass was an important factor in this battle because the Americans, for the most part, massed forces, but the Japanese didn't. Their inability to mass ground forces and air power to defend Leyte resulted in the relatively easy American establishment of a beachhead. Failure to mass naval power against the vastly superior American Navy directly led to failure in the naval engagements. Because the significance of the battle required massive use of forces by both sides, economy of force was not a significant factor considered by either side.

MANEUVER

War is a complex interaction of moves and counter-moves. Maneuver is the movement of friendly forces in relation to enemy forces. Commanders seek to maneuver their strengths selectively against an enemy's weakness while avoiding engagements with forces of superior strength. Effective use of maneuver can maintain the initiative, dictate the terms of engagement, retain security, and position forces at the right time and place to execute surprise attacks. Maneuver permits rapid massing of combat power and effective disengagement of forces. While maneuver is essential, it is not without risk. Moving large forces may lead to loss of cohesion and control (1:2-6).

American Example:

Admiral Oldendorf perceptively recognized that he could use maneuver to his advantage during his encounter in Surigao Strait. He maneuvered his destroyers to deliver torpedo attacks against the large Japanese vessels as they ran through the narrow strait where their ability to take evasive action was greatly restricted. This resulted in many hits on battleships and destroyers (17:96,105, 108).

Admiral Oldendorf skillfully maneuvered his fleet to concentrate firepower on the Japanese who were in a weak position. In addition to a brilliant preliminary running torpedo attack by PT boats and destroyers (18:99-110), he placed his vessels in a line across the strait through which the Japanese must advance as a column.

...The Americans would be able to open fire simultaneously with full broadsides on the Japanese ships while steering across the head of the hostile column; whereas only the front guns of the advancing vessels would be able to reply...this tactic is known as crossing the T (17:108).

Nishimura's fleet was annihilated, and he went down with his flagship (17:115).

Admiral Sprague, while under Kurita's attack, skillfully maneuvered Taffy Three. Despite extreme pressure, he turned his ships due east which allowed planes to be launched to attack Kurita, but which did not bring his force unnecessarily close to Kurita (17:152). He then maneuvered southwest keeping Taffy Three between Kurita and Leyte Gulf. If he would have continued east, Kurita could have ignored Taffy Three and pressed toward the beachhead (5:176). Sprague wisely denied Kurita this opportunity.

Admiral Sprague skillfully maneuvered destroyer attacks under smoke screen to deliver torpedoes to slow down Kurita's advance on Taffy Three. Japanese vessels repeatedly were hit and were consistently forced to take uncoordinated evasive action (14:174-182). According to a high ranking Japanese Admiral, "this attack greatly delayed our advance" (18:182). This operation, along with air attack, directly contributed to Kurita breaking off the attack because of a loss of control of his forces.

Japanese Example:

Admiral Nishimura, while transiting Surigao Strait under attack, maneuvered poorly. Despite constant blows, Nishimura called on his ships to attack anything they met. He never attempted to take advantage of the protection of either shore, but instead he stuck to the middle of the strait (17:108). Thus Admiral Nishimura sailed his fleet to complete destruction.

Admiral Ozawa skillfully maneuvered his diversionary fleet to optimumly achieve his objective.

During the night Ozawa had steered various courses while maintaining roughly the same distance (200 miles) from Cape Engano. He did not want to sail too far south in order that he could pull Halsey as far as possible from San Bernardino Strait (17:122).

Ozawa succeeded in luring Halsey far enough north that he could not be part of action between Seventh Fleet and Admiral Kurita.

Admiral Kurita failed to effectively maneuver his force when attacking Taffy Three. Instead of forming a powerful, cooperative battleline, he permitted each vessel to take any offensive action its captain saw fit (17:151). The result was an extremely fragmented and unsuccessful attack which eventually caused Kurita to break contact.

Summary:

Maneuver was an important factor in the naval clashes. The Americans consistently displayed skillful maneuver. However, the Japanese, especially Admirals Nishimura and Kurita, ignored maneuver in key situations. This led to Nishimura's annihilation, and it contributed to Kurita's decision to break off an action which, in fact, he could have easily won.

TIMING AND TEMPO

Timing and tempo is the principle of executing military operations at a point in time and at a rate which optimizes the use of friendly forces and which inhibits or denies the effectiveness of enemy forces. The purpose is to dominate the action, to remain unpredictable, and to create uncertainty in the mind of the enemy. Commanders seek to influence the timing and tempo of military actions by seizing the initiative and operating beyond the enemy's ability to react effectively. Controlling the action may require a mix of surprise, security, mass and maneuver to take advantage of emerging and fleeting opportunities. Consequently, attacks against an enemy must be executed at a time, frequency and intensity that will do the most to achieve objectives. Timing and tempo require that commanders have an intelligence structure that can identify opportunities and a command, control, and communications network that can responsively direct combat power to take advantage of those opportunities (1:2-6).

American Example:

The timing of the entire invasion, originally scheduled for December, was wisely advanced to 20 October because of Admiral Halsey's perception that the Japanese were weaker in the Southwest Pacific Area (3:8, 9). By advancing the schedule, MacArthur's staff realized they would keep the Japanese off balance (5:41). This proved to be correct.

The timing of the landing immediately following the massive naval and air bombardment was perfect. Because the 16th Division had withdrawn from the coast during the shelling, the Americans were able to secure most of the coastal defenses before the Japanese could regroup and return (3:80).

Following his decision to return to San Bernardino Strait, Admiral Halsey excessively delayed the effort, and he was consequently ineffective. Halsey decided to restructure his force which

imposed a delay. He then decided to slow the entire fleet to refuel several vessels that were running low. All in all, Halsey wasted so much time that he couldn't even arrive at San Bernardino Strait in time to block Kurita's retreat (17:133). Kurita's fleet escaped.

Japanese Example:

The Japanese fundamentally ignored the need for a rapid reaction to an American invasion.

The prime requisites for success in such an operation were timely information of the enemy and the positioning of ones own forces to react promptly. The Japanese plans disregarded both these essential factors. Consequently, the American invasion was in its sixth day when the Japanese were ready to attack (4:307).

These delays ensured that the Americans would have a more secure hold on the beachhead.

The Japanese, confused by American naval operations, displayed poor timing by prematurely activating the SHO Plan. In reaction to Third Fleet operations off Formosa, the Japanese, on 12 October, massed all available aircraft to attack enemy task forces. These included nearly all of Admiral Ozawa's carrier planes. Because of extremely heavy losses, the Japanese "...had needlessly crippled Japanese air power and rendered it all but useless for the SHO operation that was now sure to come" (5:63). Because air forces were to open the way for the surface forces as specified by the SHO Plan, this would have significant negative impact when SHO was activated later in the month in response to the American invasion (17:18, 5:89).

Japanese delay in subsequently implementing the SHO Plan in response to the Leyte invasion displayed poor timing. Japanese decision makers believed, because of erroneous pilot reporting, that the American fleet had been wiped out near Formosa earlier in the month. They were also unwilling to activate the SHO because of a false alarm raised a month earlier. Therefore, although American ships first entered Leyte Gulf on 17 October, SHO was not formally activated until 1700 on 18 October (5:79,80,85). This cost precious time for firm commitment of all tasked forces. Further, the Japanese fleets, because of fuel shortages, were not ordered to sail until the location of the invasion was certain. This was at 1110 on 18 October (17:29). This certainly contributed to the arrival of these forces at Leyte on 25 October, five days after the landing, rather than the desired two days after the landing.

The Japanese also, upon changing the location of the decisive Philippine land battle from Luzon to Leyte, failed to speed the decision to the commanders in the Philippines.

Despite the clear need for speed in transmitting this decision to Terauchi and Yamashita, the Army staff did not send off an immediate radio to Manila. Instead Colonel Khiji Sugita...left Tokyo for Manila on the morning of October 19 with word of the decision and a detailed plan for implementing it. Flying first to Formosa...Sugita didn't reach Southern Army Headquarters until...a good 8 hrs after the first American troops had landed on Leyte (5:86).

As previously described, General Makino's 16th Division defending Leyte didn't find out until over a week later (5:122). This forced Leyte forces to fight a delaying vice a decisive action which was required by the senior leadership.

The naval Central Force failed to maintain the tempo of the

advance through San Bernardino Strait. Because of heavy air attacks, Admiral Kurita retreated on a westerly course before turning east toward the strait placing him 7 hours behind schedule (17:66). This placed Admiral Nishimura, the southern complement to Kurita's northern portion of a pincers, in a position to enter the Leyte Gulf area alone (17:96).

Admiral Nishimura's timing for entering Surigao Strait is questionable (4:323). He was supposed to enter the Leyte Gulf area from the south at the same time as Admiral Kurita advanced toward Leyte Gulf from the north. Although he was supposed to arrive at the beachhead at dawn, Nishimura unilaterally sped up to arrive at 0400, an hour and one half ahead of schedule (6:83,84). When Admiral Kurita advised that he would be delayed, "Nishimura persisted in maintaining speed without waiting to combine his attack with that of Kurita..." (17:97). His unilateral one and one half hour advance of the schedule placed him in a narrow passage where it was impossible to turn around (6:84). Consequently, Seventh Fleet was afforded the opportunity to fully concentrate on Nishimura's fleet which they destroyed. The reason why Kurita permitted Nishimura, his subordinate, to fumble the timing remains a mystery (6:144).

Summary:

In the author's opinion, timing and tempo were one of the two most significant factors in the battle at Leyte. With the exception of Halsey's return to San Bernardino Strait, the Americans timed actions well. However, Japanese timing was horrendous. They first prematurely activated their most critical plan and wasted their

precious air power. When they later reactivated the plan, they waited too long and delayed in tasking their navy. The timing of the advance of their surface fleets, which was so critical to success, was extremely sloppy. The cumulative effect of this poor timing was complete Japanese failure in their naval effort.

UNITY OF COMMAND

Unity of command is the principle of vesting appropriate authority and responsibility in a single commander to effect unity of effort in carrying out an assigned task. Unity of command provides for the effective exercise of leadership and power of decision over assigned forces for the purpose of achieving a common objective. Unity of command obtains unity of effort by the coordinated action of all forces toward a common goal. While coordination may be attained by cooperation, it is best achieved by giving a single commander full authority. Unity of command is imperative to employing all aerospace forces effectively. The versatility and decisive striking power of aerospace forces places an intense demand on these forces in unified action. To take full advantage of these qualities, aerospace forces are employed as an entity through the leadership of an air commander. The air commander orchestrates the overall air effort to achieve stated objectives. Effective leadership through unity of command produces a unified air effort that can deliver decisive blows against an enemy and exploit his weaknesses. The air commander, as the central authority for the air effort, develops strategies and plans, determines priorities, allocates resources, and controls assigned aerospace forces to achieve the primary objective. Success in carrying out these actions is greatly enhanced by an effective command, control, communications, and intelligence network (1:2-6, 2-7).

American Example:

One effective employment of unity of command involved the transfer of a portion of Nimitz's forces to the command of General MacArthur who was in charge of the invasion in the Southwest Pacific

Area. These forces included the task force previously tasked for the aborted Yap invasion; it also included Vice Admiral Theodore Wilkinson's Third Amphibious Force consisting of many transports, escort carriers, battleships, cruisers and destroyers. The ensuing efficient coordination of plans and forces for the operation was one of the greatest achievements of the Pacific War (18:10).

The command structure of the invasion force was highly effective.

Overall commander of this force was General MacArthur. As CINCSWPA, MacArthur did not directly command any troops, ships, or planes himself, but he had in his subordinate army, navy, and air force commanders three able and experienced leaders, all used to serving under him and carrying out his directives...(5:74).

This is in contrast to the poor Japanese command structure described later in this chapter.

The lack of a single joint command controlling all forces involved in the operation (independent of the invasion force) was a major flaw which persisted despite General MacArthur's expressions of concern (14:445). Admiral Halsey, whose Third Fleet was to assist in protecting the beachhead, worked for Admiral Nimitz (CINCPAC) vice General MacArthur. The latter two had no common superior nearer than the Joint Chiefs in Washington. The lack of a single commander with authority over the entire operation permitted Halsey to choose his objective (5:77, 17:26), which, as previously described, involved both protecting the beachhead and destroying the Japanese Fleet (17:74). Halsey chose to chase the Japanese carrier fleet, placing the invasion force at grave risk, despite MacArthur's statement that he should consider his protection of the beachhead "...essential and paramount" (2:269). This left San Bernardino Strait unguarded and,

because of misunderstandings resulting from the split command, permitted the Japanese Central Force to advance and attack a surprised Seventh Fleet (17:84,85). According to General MacArthur, the blame for the divided command which nearly resulted in disaster could "be placed squarely on the door of Washington" (13:266). Even Admiral Halsey acknowledged the seriousness of this situation when he said:

If we had been under the same command...the battle for Leyte Gulf may have been fought differently to a different result. It is folly to cry over spilled milk, but it is wisdom to observe the cause for future avoidance, when blood has been spilled, the obligation becomes vital. In my opinion, it is vital for the Navy never to expose itself again to the perils of a divided command in the same area (7:210).

The separate command of Halsey's Third Fleet also caused horrible coordination of forces. This occurred despite the fact that Halsey's OPLAN specifically tasked him to coordinate in detail with Seventh Fleet (18:28). For example, following his abandonment of San Bernardino Strait, Halsey's spotter planes sighted Kurita moving toward the strait. On the first sighting, he advised Admiral Kinkaid of Seventh Fleet that he saw a few undamaged vessels. He didn't even report the second sighting (17:86, 87).

...this must be sighted as a further illustration of Halsey's failure to coordinate his actions with those of his colleague or to keep him properly informed of developments(17:86,87).

There are many more examples of this dangerous lack of coordination which contributed to a significant, and perhaps unnecessary, peril to the invasion force.

Japanese Example:

Unity of command was a basic Japanese problem due to inter-service rivalry and the fact that the Army and Navy each guarded their autonomy (10:39). According to Chief of Staff of the Japanese Third Fleet, "the Army and Navy always quarreled with each other. In theory they were supposed to cooperate...but personalities were the problem" (3:53,54). Concerning SHO, neither service knew of the plans of the other (9:19), and Admiral Kurita, although desperate, never even considered calling on the Army for air cover because he didn't know the disposition of Army Air Forces (18:60).

A fundamental flaw was the fragmented command structure of the forces tasked to defend the Philippines.

The Japanese command structure in the Philippines was a confusing and divided one. There was no single unified command for the islands which made the integration of land, air, and sea operations extremely difficult. The Army ground commander in the Philippines was General Yamashita. He commanded the 14th Area Army but had no authority over General Taminaga's Fourth Air Army. Both officers reported to Marshal Terauchi, who as Southern Army Commander was responsible for Army forces throughout the southwest Pacific... Terauchi did not, however, have any authority over naval forces...all Japanese Naval forces except certain units...were under Admiral Toyoda's Combined Fleet (5:72,73).

The coordination of Toyoda and Terauchi could take place only in Tokyo where interservice antagonism precluded close coordination. This divided command adversely affected execution of the very complex SHO Plan, and contributed to the inability of the Japanese to coordinate air and naval attacks (5:73,74,211).

The four fleets tasked in the SHO Plan were not under a single commander other than Admiral Toyoda in Tokyo. As a very significant example, Admiral Nishimura reported to Admiral Kurita who worked for Toyoda. However, Admiral Shima worked directly for Vice Admiral Mikawa (17:17,51), who worked for Toyoda. Together, the forces of Admirals Shima and Nishimura comprised Southern Force which was to penetrate Surigao Strait and attack Leyte Gulf from the south. However, they did not know of each other's location, and they were not communicating. Although only 40 miles apart, these fleets, the southern portion of a pincers, advanced as separate sections (17:97,98). This situation was in part, caused by a personality conflict between the two admirals (4:315). Members of Nishimura's own staff strongly believed these fleets should enter Surigao Strait as one unit, but, guided by Japanese naval discipline, they said nothing (9:163). Consequently, Admiral Nishimura's fleet, weaker than if Shima had joined him, sailed alone to destruction in Surigao Strait. It "...was the supreme example of divided command" (6:92).

Summary:

Unity of command is, in the author's opinion, the second of two of the most critical factors in this battle. The Americans generally had a good command structure. The one exception, involving Third Fleet being under different command than the invasion force, nearly resulted in a disaster. The fortune that prevented disaster does not reduce the criticality of this error. The Japanese, however, had fundamental shortfalls in interservice cooperation, organization of

forces defending the Philippines, and command structure of the fleets tasked in the SHO Plan. These problems directly led to total Japanese defeat on Leyte and on the seas.

SIMPLICITY

To achieve a unity of effort toward a common goal, guidance must be quick, clear, and concise - it must have simplicity. Simplicity promotes understanding, reduces confusion, and permits ease of execution in the intense and uncertain environment of combat. Simplicity adds to the cohesion of a force by providing unambiguous guidance that fosters a clear understanding of expected actions. Simplicity is an important ingredient in achieving victory, and it must pervade all levels of a military operation. Extensive and meticulous preparation in peacetime enhances the simplicity of an operation during the confusion and friction of wartime. Command structures, strategies, plans, tactics, and procedures must all be clear, simple, and unencumbered to permit ease of execution. Commanders at all levels must strive to meet that same goal (1:2-7).

American Example:

The Leyte invasion was a simple three phase operation. First, move over water and secure Leyte Gulf; second, capture Leyte Valley and open up San Juanico and Panaon Straits; and third, secure the rest of the island (3:23,24).

Japanese Example:

The fundamental aspects of the Japanese SHO Plan resulted in an extremely complex operation (6:136). First, they would use land based air forces to attack American carriers and transports. This would occur two days before the arrival of Japanese surface forces which, as has been shown, consisted of four separate fleets.

One fleet would act as a decoy and draw forces away from the invasion area. The remaining forces would decisively engage American combatants and, after annihilating this force, would wipe out the convoy and troops at the landing point (17:18). This would require accurate intelligence, precise timing, reliable communications, and utmost cooperation and coordination between naval and air forces(5:211). The Japanese had significant problems in all these areas. The complexity of the operation made execution difficult, and, in the end, it failed.

Summary:

Simplicity becomes a significant factor in this battle only because the Japanese SHO Plan was excessively complex. The accurate intelligence and reliable communications necessary to successfully execute the plan were not available. This contributed to Japanese defeat at Leyte.

LOGISTICS

Logistics is the principle of sustaining both man and machine in combat. Logistics is the principle of obtaining, moving, and maintaining warfighting potential. Success in warfare depends on getting sufficient men and machines in the right position at the right time. This requires a simple, secure, and flexible logistics system to be an integral part of an air operation. Regardless of the scope and nature of a military operation, logistics is one principle that must always be given attention. Logistics can limit the extent of an operation or permit the attainment of objectives. In sustained air warfare, logistics may require the constant attention of an air commander. This can impose a competing and draining demand on the time and energy of a commander, particularly when that commander may be immersed in making critical operational decisions. This competing demand will also impose a heavy burden on a command, control, and communications network. The information, mechanics,

and decisions required to get men, machines, and their required materiel where and when they are needed is extensive and demanding. During intense combat, these logistics decisions may even tend to saturate the time and attention of a commander. To reduce the stresses imposed by potentially critical logistics decisions, commanders must establish a simple and secure logistic system in peacetime that can reduce the burden of constant attention in wartime. Effective logistics also requires a flexible system that can function in all combat environments and that can respond to abrupt and sudden change. For example, if weather or enemy activities force a move in operating locations, sustaining an air operation may depend on a logistics system that can respond to that exigency. Therefore, in preparing for war, air commanders must establish and integrate a logistics system that can keep pace with the requirements of air operations in combat. This requires a flexible logistics system that is not fixed, and one that can provide warfighting potential when and where it is needed (1:2-7).

American Example:

General MacArthur recognized the criticality of logistics support to an invasion the size of the Leyte effort. This is evident in his creation, for the first time in the southwestern Pacific, an Army Service Command charged with providing all logistic services and support (3:35). Although there were some shortages of certain items (17:13), the enormous amounts of supplies required to support the landing were estimated as required to accompany the force to preclude any shortages. These included 1,500,000 tons of general equipment, 235,000 tons of combat vehicles, 200,000 tons of ammunition, and 200,000 tons of medical supplies (3:36).

American logistics support was flawed by several factors indicating poor preplanning. Faulty stowage of the ships caused immediately needed supplies to be buried under items that would not

be needed until much later. Supplies were randomly sent ashore and carelessly thrown on vehicles. Shore handling was plagued by lack of manning and mechanical equipment. Nevertheless, 107,450 tons was brought ashore on A-Day (3:80,83,84).

Japanese Example:

Logistical problems had a fundamental impact on Japanese Naval operations.

Ideally the entire mobile fleet should have been stationed in home waters, ready to strike as a unit in any direction. Yet American submarines had done such an excellent job of cutting Japan's supply lines to the south that there was not enough oil available in home ports to support the entire fleet (5:50).

The fleet was therefore divided into smaller fleets located in the Inland Sea and the Singapore region (6:12). Especially significant was the wide geographic separation of the Japanese carriers from the main surface fleet. Although Admiral Ozawa hoped to eventually join Admiral Kurita, there was insufficient time (18:15, 22). This situation adversely contributed to the participation of four separate fleets in the battle in Leyte Gulf.

The Japanese also had a significant logistics problem on Leyte itself. Food, gasoline, equipment, and supplies were deficient (5:55). These shortages must certainly have had negative impact on the defensive operations of the 16th Division.

The Japanese were not logistically prepared for optimum naval execution of the SHO Plan. Because of a shortage of fuel, Toyoda dared not commit his fleet immediately in case the operations reported should prove to be a diversion. If they were, his ships, prematurely committed, would have to return to sources of fuel in the

southern Pacific just when they would be needed most (17:29). This caused the unfortunate delay in sailing, described in Chapter 7, and it contributed to postponing the date of the naval battle until three days later than desired and planned.

Summary:

Logistics was an important factor at Leyte because the Japanese lacked the material to optimumly defend the Philippines. Fuel shortages, the most significant limitation, forced their naval power to be separated and to act conservatively. This contributed to the fragmented naval advance on Leyte which ended in failure.

COHESION

Cohesion is the principle of establishing and maintaining the warfighting spirit and capability of a force to win. Cohesion is the cement that holds a unit together through the trials of combat and is critical to the fighting effectiveness of a force. Throughout military experience, cohesive forces have generally achieved victory, while disjointed efforts have usually met defeat. Cohesion depends directly on the spirit a leader inspires in his people, the shared experiences of a force in training or combat, and the sustained operational capability of a force. Commanders build cohesion through effective leadership and generating a sense of common identity and shared purpose. Leaders maintain cohesion by communicating objectives clearly, demonstrating genuine concern for the morale and welfare of their people, and employing men and machines according to the dictates of sound military doctrine. Cohesion in a force is produced over time through effective leadership at all levels of command (1:2-8).

American Example:

The author could find no documented example of American cohesion.

Japanese Example:

The cohesion of forces defending Leyte was adversely affected

by changes in command personnel and by the poor readiness of troops. Prior to the invasion, vast personnel changes were directed in the 14th Area Army. General Tomoyuki Yamashita was appointed commander on 29 September and reached Manila on 6 October, Invasion Day. Lt Gen Muto, his newly designated Chief of Staff, arrived on 20 October, Invasion Day. Many other key staff officers also did not arrive until early October. The consequence was that the decisive battle for Leyte took place before these officers could comprehend the situation in the Philippines(8:121, 122). What of the fighting men?

The Japanese garrison...was somewhat listless after long years of occupation duty. As they began suddenly and vigorously to consolidate...the troops had no time to train in tactics against the U.S. forces. Thus, they ended up by meeting the American landings without sufficient preparation (8:127).

The cumulative effect was a less than optimally cohesive force to counter the invasion.

The Japanese naval Southern Force was not a cohesive unit. It operated under the command of two admirals (Shima and Nishimura), reporting to different bosses. Also, Shima knew nothing of Nishimura's tasking, plan, or route (17:51). As such, they would operate independently rather than as a single, undoubtedly more effective, entity.

Admiral Nishimura's fleet was also far from a cohesive unit. Nishimura's tactical concepts were vastly different than those of the commanders of his ships (18:92). Further,

...Nishimura did not even know the commanders of the ships he was leading into action. His reaction to orders and to advice that one tried to give him was, 'Bah: We'll do our best' (4:313).

Such an uncohesive relationship certainly could not improve the effectiveness of Nishimura's force.

Doubts among Admiral Kurita's fleet about the wisdom of attacking the beachhead adversely impacted the commonly shared purpose necessary for unit cohesion. Kurita's men believed, since they were three days late, that most of the American transports would have departed Leyte Gulf (5:130). Kurita's men were also concerned about the plan to conduct the operation during the day since they had been training for a night action for months(9:4). The protests became so vocal that Kurita had to call a special meetings to quiet his staff (11:120).

'Our whole force was uneasy' recalled Kurita's Chief of Staff, Rear Admiral Tomiui Koyanagi. And 'this feeling' he added, 'was reflected in our leadership during the battle' that followed (17:130).

Kurita was to later attribute his decision to abandon the Leyte Gulf effort to his doubts about the value of proceeding (17:192).

The cohesion of Kurita's fleet was destroyed when it encountered Taffy Three. Kurita's order, "everyone attack" (4:326), permitting each vessel to take independent action, made it an engagement of individual vessels against Taffy Three rather than a Japanese fleet against Taffy Three (17:151). In his surprise, Kurita lost tactical control of his forces (9:253). This was a significant factor in Kurita's decision to break contact (17:179).

Summary:

Cohesion was a significant factor because the Japanese had definite problems in this area. Ground forces defending Leyte were far from a crack combat unit. Nishimura's fleet was thrown together. Kurita's fleet was disgruntled and employed as less than a cohesive entity. This certainly adversely contributed to the desperate Japanese effort to dislodge the American invasion force from the Philippines.

SECTION THREE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS IN
GUIDED DISCUSSION FORMAT

Discussion Questions:

1. Lead Off Question:

Was the objective of the American invasion of Leyte clearly defined?

Discussion:

American objectives for the invasion were clear and simple. Forces were tasked to seize specific objectives which would result in the capture of Leyte. In turn, Leyte would act as a base for further operations in the Southwest Pacific Area and, eventually, against Japan. A strong force on Leyte would also serve to sever Japanese access to vitally needed raw materials in Southeast Asia.

a. Follow-up Question:

Were American objectives clear cut in all cases?

Discussion:

The Americans committed a serious error by affording Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet the opportunity to choose between conflicting objectives. Halsey could choose between protecting the beachhead or chasing the Japanese fleet. When he chose to chase enemy carriers, he permitted the Japanese easy access to the beachhead. Only skillful American naval/air combat and fortune prevented disaster.

b. Follow-up Question:

Were Japanese objectives clearly defined in this engagement, and were they a factor in the outcome of the battle?

Discussion:

The Japanese had a general objective of dislodging the American invasion force; however, specific objectives to accomplish this goal were not well defined and were frequently conflicting. Although

they had previously decided to fight a decisive battle on Luzon, regardless of the invasion site, they changed their minds and, when it was evident Leyte was being invaded, decided to fight on Leyte. This decision was without the knowledge of the ground commander on Leyte and was made despite Japanese military weakness on the island. Also, the Japanese couldn't make up their minds to fight at the beach or in the hills; so they initially compromised and decided to do both. However, once the fighting had begun on Leyte, they decided their objective was to hold forward positions near the beach. The responsible ground commander on Leyte was unaware of this change and withdrew to the hills. The navy also suffered from unclear and conflicting objectives. One fleet was told merely to attack Leyte Gulf from the South. The main fleet was told its objective was to attack the beachhead or, as an optional objective, to attack carrier forces if the opportunity is available. In the end, the latter was chosen and the beachhead was not attacked. The absence of clear cut objectives definitely adversely affected the outcome of the battle for the Japanese.

2. Lead Off Question:

Was the application/non-application of the Principle of Security a significant factor for either side at Leyte?

Discussion:

Although both sides made mistakes in this area, the Japanese committed serious errors in the areas of intelligence and communications, both necessary ingredients for effective security. Prior to the invasion, they failed to heed intelligence estimates that Leyte would be invaded in late October and they failed to conduct basic reconnais-

sance to reveal the assembly and movement of the huge American flotilla of over 700 ships. As a consequence, the invasion came as a complete surprise. As the four Japanese fleets converged on Leyte and began battle, the commanders received virtually no intelligence on enemy disposition and strength, information necessary to exploit American weaknesses. The Japanese also lacked effective communications to determine status of friendly forces/operations necessary to execute a complex plan such as that employed by the Japanese at Leyte. The cumulative result was a definite Japanese defeat which, had proper security measures been employed, may not have occurred.

a. Follow-up Question:

Did the Americans consistently employ appropriate security measures?

Discussion:

In general, the Americans effectively employed the principle of security; however, one significant exception nearly proved critical. Following Admiral Halsey's decision to abandon San Bernardino Strait and to chase Japanese carriers, he failed, despite knowledge of strong enemy forces in the area, to station a single vessel to monitor enemy passage through the strait. As a result, the main Japanese fleet transitted the strait, undetected, and surprised the American Seventh Fleet which it quickly attacked. Skillful American combat and serious indecisions on the part of the Japanese fleet commander are the only factors that prevented the Japanese fleet from attacking the American beachhead. This important American breach of security nearly caused disaster.

b. Follow-up Question:

Is there a definite correlation between security and surprise, another

Principle of War?

Discussion:

It is impossible to achieve complete surprise without effective security. For example, the Americans achieved complete strategic surprise when they invaded Leyte. However, had the enemy been afforded the opportunity through ineffective operations/communications security or security leaks to understand American plans, the surprise at Leyte would not have occurred.

3. Lead-Off Question:

Did the Japanese navy effectively mass forces to achieve success in their operation to attack surface forces and to penetrate Leyte Gulf and attack the beachhead?

Discussion:

Although virtually every ship in the Japanese navy was tasked to participate in the operation, the vessels were separated into four separate fleets. Logistics problems precluded the carrier fleet from operating with the others. However, had the other three surface fleets combined, they would have been a truly powerful surface force. Instead, they operated independently and presented the Americans a set of multiple adversaries which were certainly weaker than they would have been as a single entity. Further, given the serious Japanese communications problems, each fleet frequently operated without knowledge of the status and operations of the other fleets. This piecemeal employment of critical assets was certainly less effective than if the Japanese would have massed their forces. The result was individual defeat of the fleets and cumulative failure.

4. Lead-off Question:

Effective maneuver is necessary to successful employment of forces.

Does the battle at Leyte offer an example?

Discussion:

American naval operations in Leyte demonstrate the skillful maneuver of forces which resulted in victory. During the Battle of Surigao Strait the American Naval commander maneuvered PT boats and destroyers to conduct torpedo attacks against the advancing Japanese causing destruction and great confusion. These were followed by an intense bombardment by surface forces maneuvered to fire full broadsides with virtually every gun against an advancing column that could use only its forward guns. These maneuvers massed devastating fire power and wiped out all but one vessel. Victory in Surigao Strait was complete.

a. Follow-up Question:

Can effective maneuver be used to offset a vastly superior force.

Discussion:

Maneuver can, if brilliantly employed, be used to offset a more powerful foe. An excellent example is the maneuver of Taffy Three to counter the attacking main Japanese Fleet which was vastly superior in firepower. The American force first maneuvered, using squalls and smoke as cover, in a direction blocking Leyte Gulf. However, the direction was sufficiently into the wind to permit launching planes for attack. The Americans then maneuvered destroyers to conduct repeated torpedo attacks against the advancing Japanese. In addition to inflicting damage, this tactic caused the Japanese to consistently take uncoordinated evasive action. This contributed to the Japanese decision to call off the attack.

b. Follow-On Question:

Did the Japanese Navy effectively use maneuver at Leyte?

Discussion:

The instances of Japanese effective use of maneuver are overshadowed by their failure to use maneuver in two key situations. First, in Surigao Strait, the Japanese commander failed to maneuver his force to take advantage of the protection of either shore while under torpedo attack. Instead he sailed directly down the middle of the strait. In the end, the Japanese lost all but one ship. Second, the Japanese commander attacking Taffy Three failed to form a powerful, cooperating battleline. Instead, he permitted each of his vessels to take independent, uncoordinated offensive action. The resulting loss of control, in addition to other factors, forced him to break off the engagement, which his powerful force could have won.

5. Lead-Off Question:

Was the principle of timing and tempo a significant factor in the battle at Leyte?

Discussion:

The Japanese consistently ignored the importance of timing and tempo at Leyte. Premature activation of their plan for the defense of the Philippine area resulted in devastation of air power, essential to success of the plan, at Formosa. Upon reactivation of the plan during the Leyte invasion, the Japanese waited too long to issue activation orders, and they delayed in tasking naval forces. Once activated, the plan required a perfectly orchestrated advance of four separate surface forces. Two fleets were to form a simultaneous pincers.

Commanders of both fleets purposely altered the timing of their advance. As a result, the cooperative pincers was never formed. Each fleet attacked individually, and both were defeated/repelled. The Japanese plan thus failed.

6. Lead-Off Question:

Unity of command is a generally accepted principle for effective combat. Did the organization of the American invasion force reflect this principle?

Discussion:

The invasion force was a true unified command. General MacArthur was the single commander of all invasion forces. Ground, air, and naval components had individual commanders; however, each was responsible to a single, on-scene commander: MacArthur. This structure ensured highly coordinated employment of invasion forces.

a. Follow-On Question:

Was there any significant flaw in the American command structure?

Discussion:

One significant flaw in American unity of command involved Admiral Halsey and his Third Fleet. Although tasked to support the invasion, Halsey worked for Admiral Nimitz as opposed to General MacArthur.. This permitted Halsey to take actions without MacArthur's concurrence/approval. Although cooperation between Halsey and MacArthur was generally good, one exception nearly proved disastrous. Admiral Halsey decided to abort his protection of the beachhead and to drive northward to attack enemy carriers. His abandonment of San Bernardino Strait permitted the main Japanese fleet access to the weaker Seventh

Fleet, and, had skillful American combat and good fortune not interceded, the opportunity to attack the beachhead. If Halsey had worked for MacArthur, this near-disaster would likely have been avoided.

b. Follow-On Question:

Did the Japanese adhere to the principle of unity of command?

Discussion:

Flaws in unity of command permeated the entire Japanese structure. A fundamental problem was the lack of cooperation between the Army and the Navy. This was the case at the highest levels in Tokyo as well as at lower levels. Another flaw was the absence of a single unified commander controlling all Japanese forces defending the Philippines. True coordination of these forces could occur only in Tokyo. Further, the four naval surface fleets in the Leyte Gulf operation were not under a single commander, other than in Tokyo. A particularly good example of the problems caused by this situation involved the Japanese Southern Force. This force was composed of two fleets under separate command. Both fleets were to penetrate Surigao Strait and attack Leyte Gulf from the south. However, each did not know the other's location, and they were not communicating. Each fought a separate action against the Americans at Surigao Strait. Both, weaker than if they were one command, were individually defeated/repelled.

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APPENDIX

ANNOTATED MAPS AND
ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTS

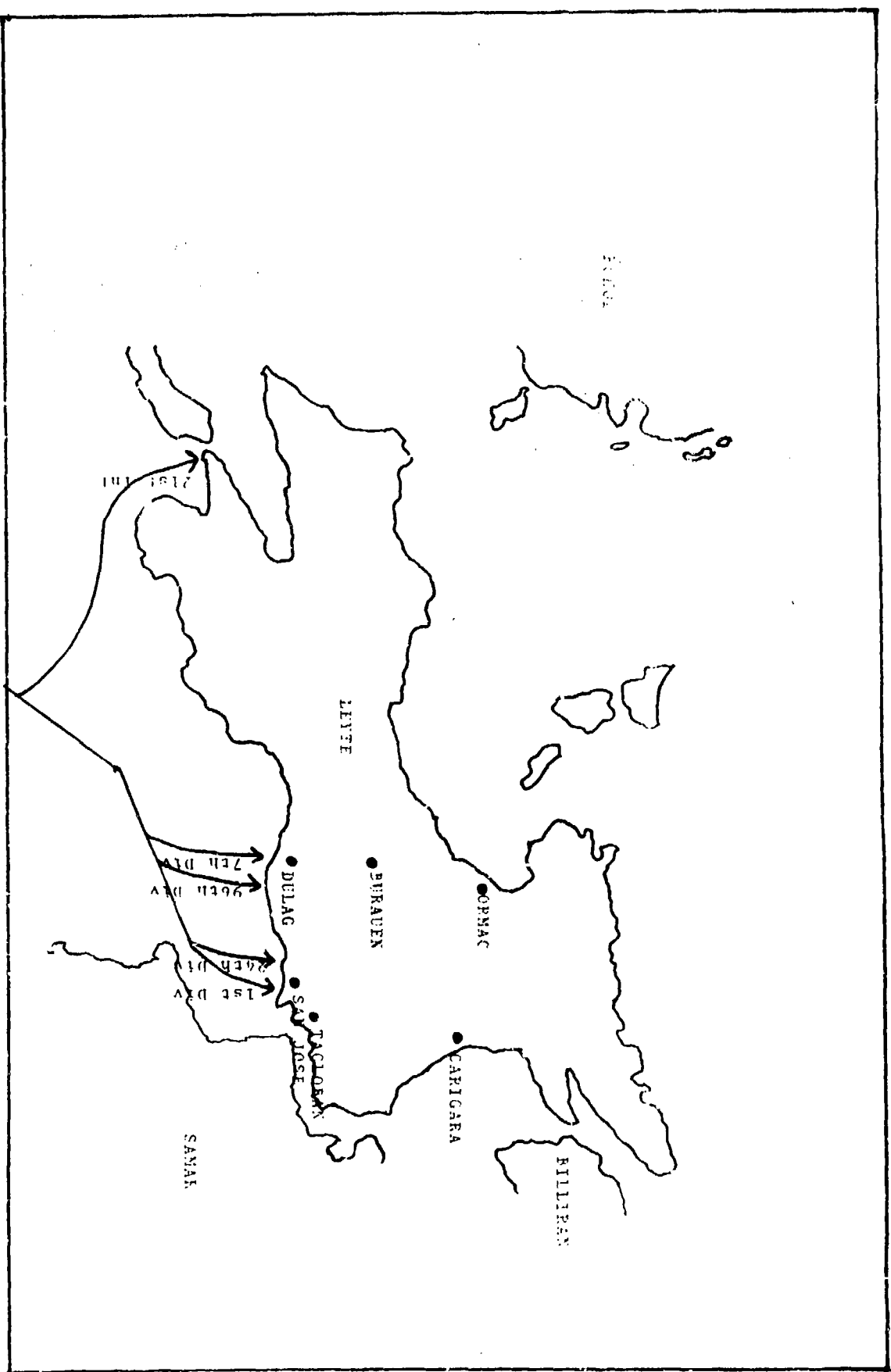


Figure 1. The Invasion (13:249)

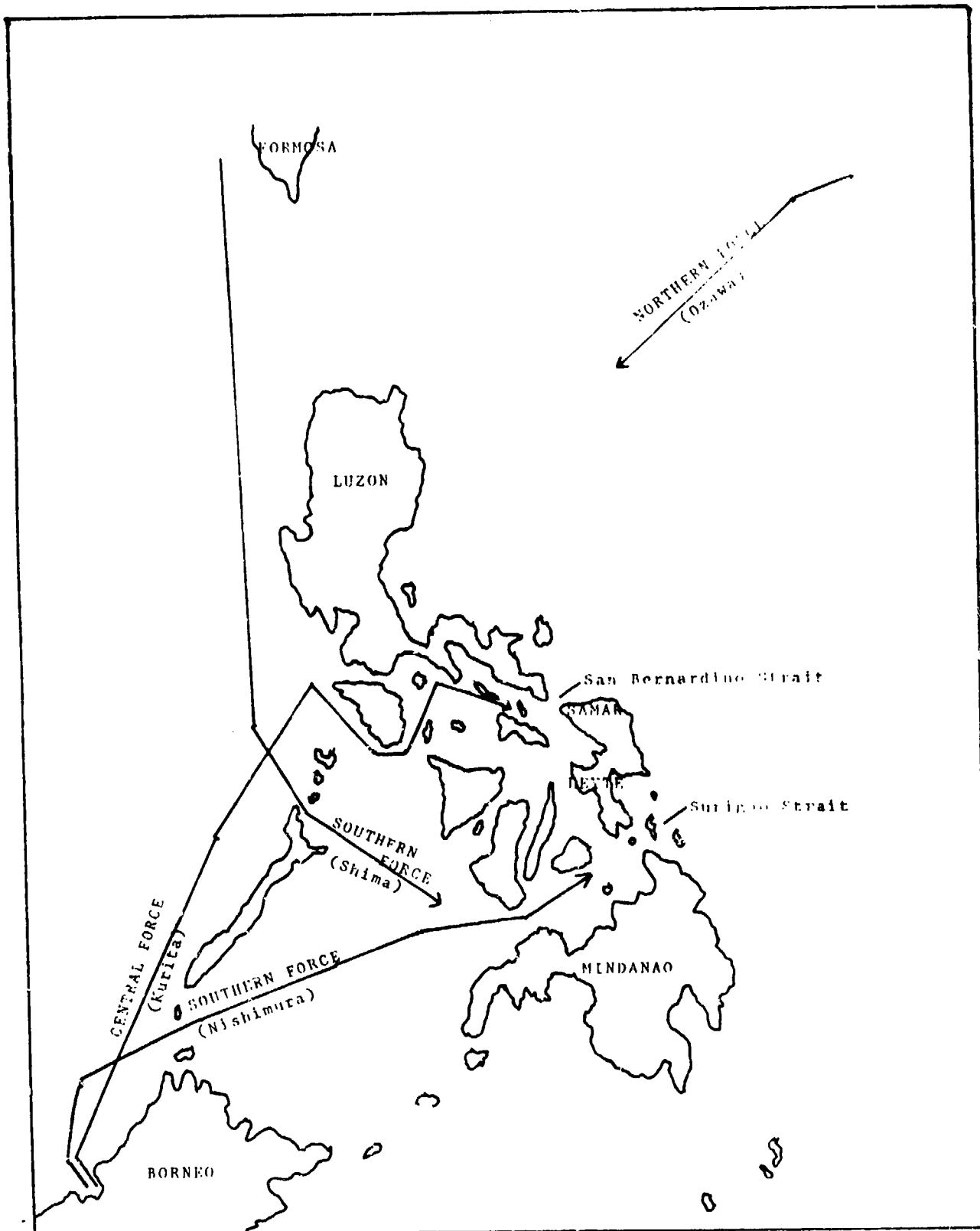


Figure 2. The Japanese Naval Advance (7:212)

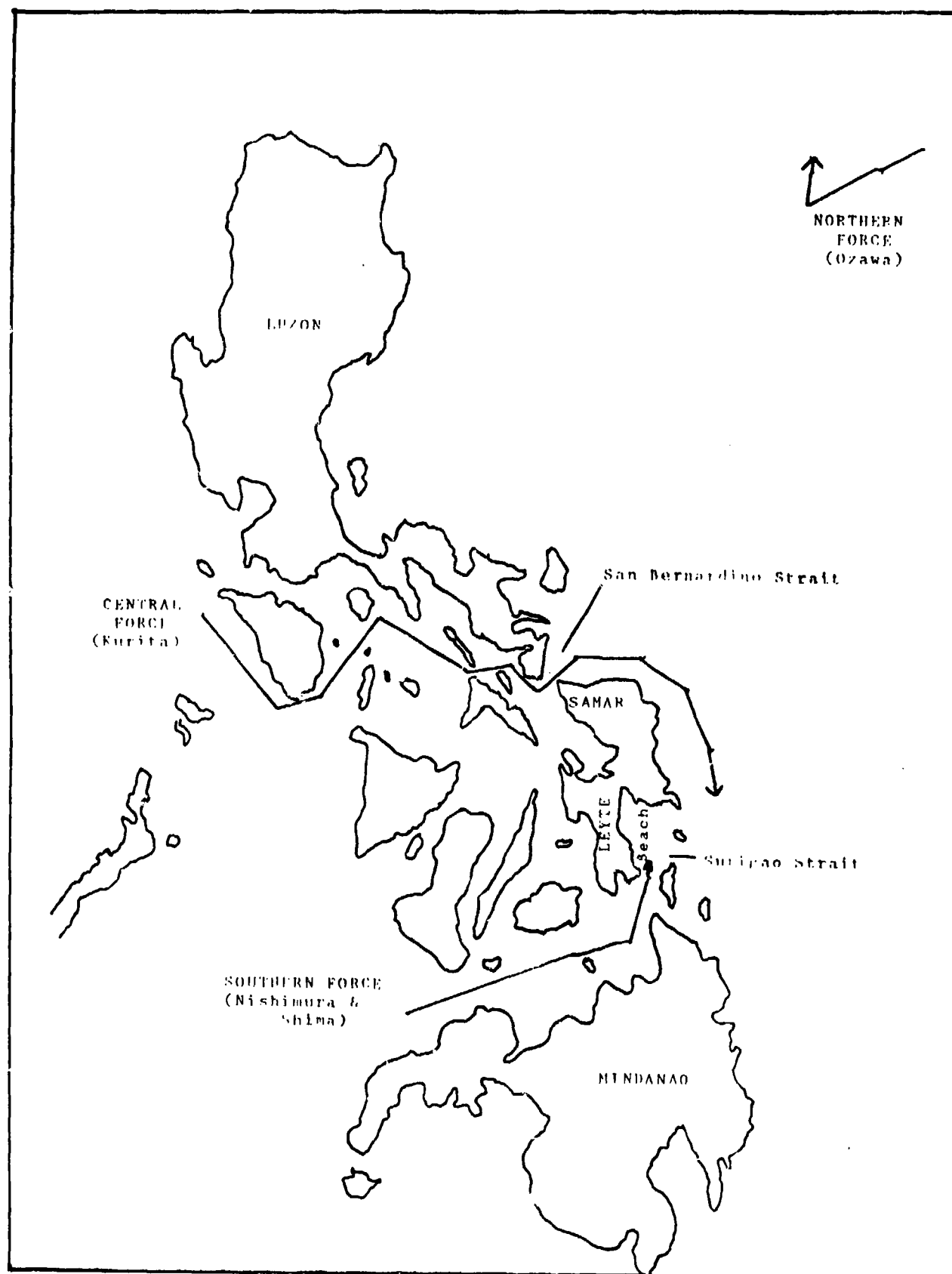


Figure 3. The Battle Among the Islands (7:212, 213, 16:118, 124)

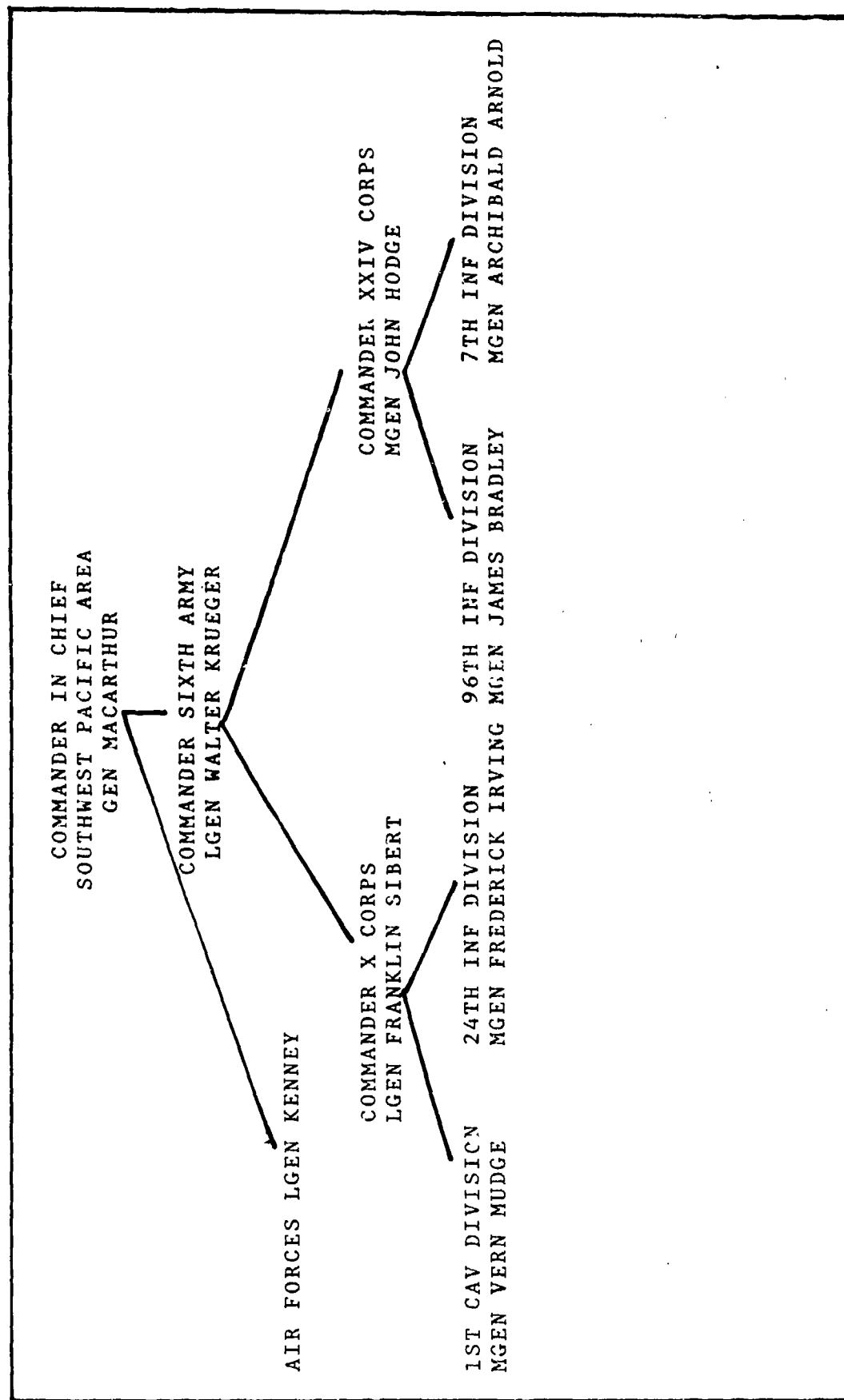


Figure 4. Primary American Army Forces in the Leyte Invasion (3: Throughout)

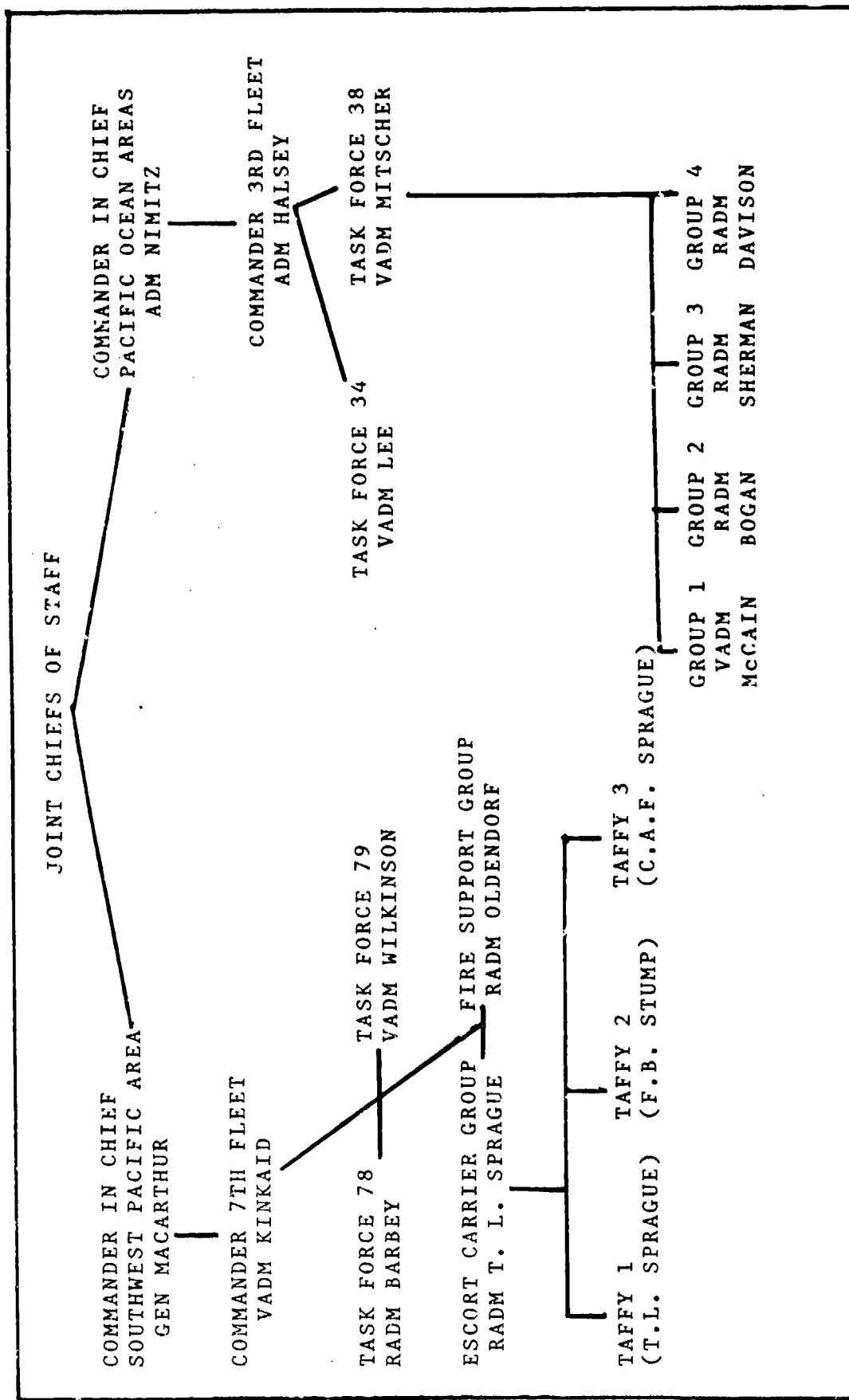


FIGURE 5. U. S. NAVAL FORCES IN THE LEYTE INVASION (16:109)

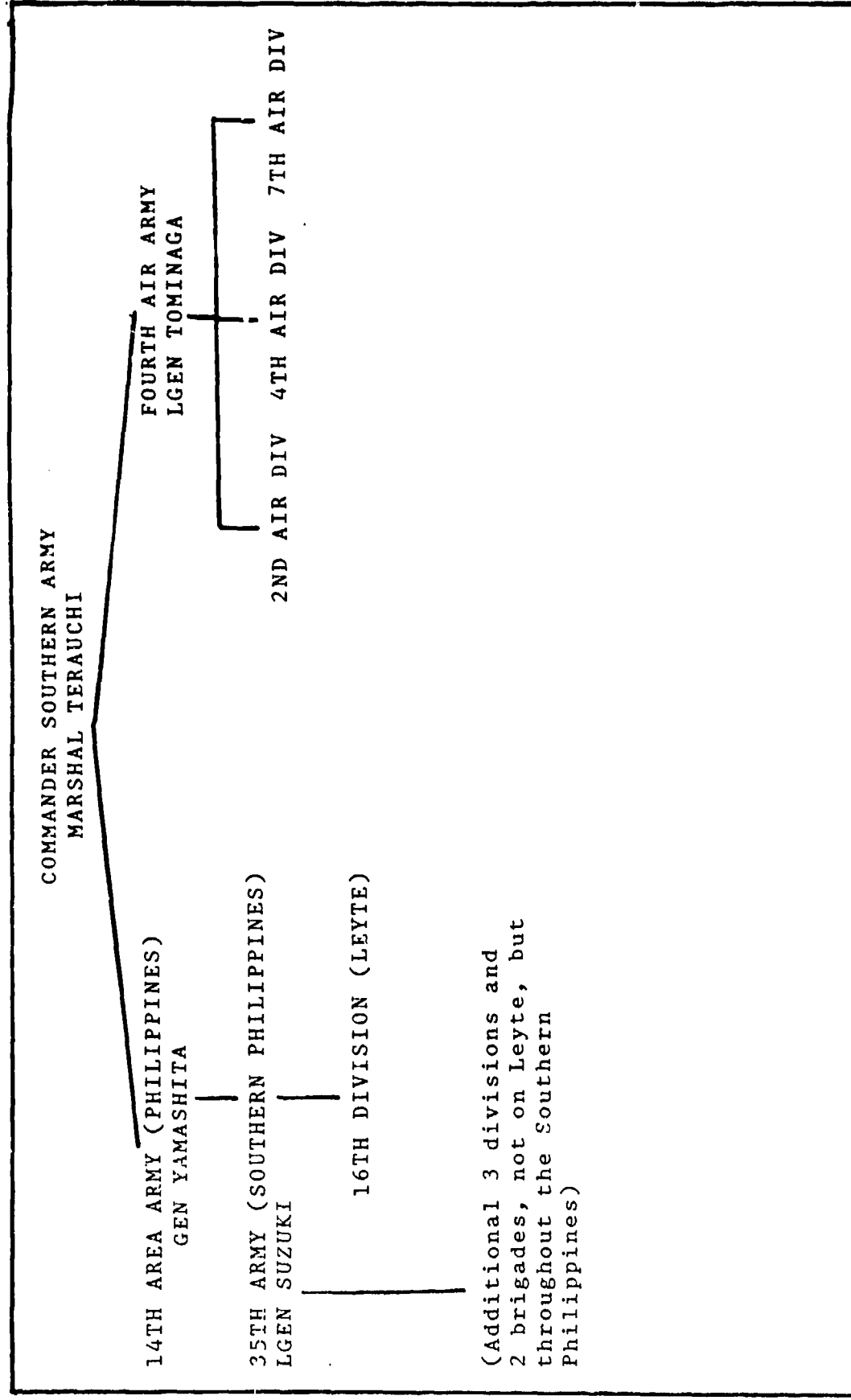


Figure 6. Primary Japanese Army Forces in the Leyte Invasion. (8:120-122)

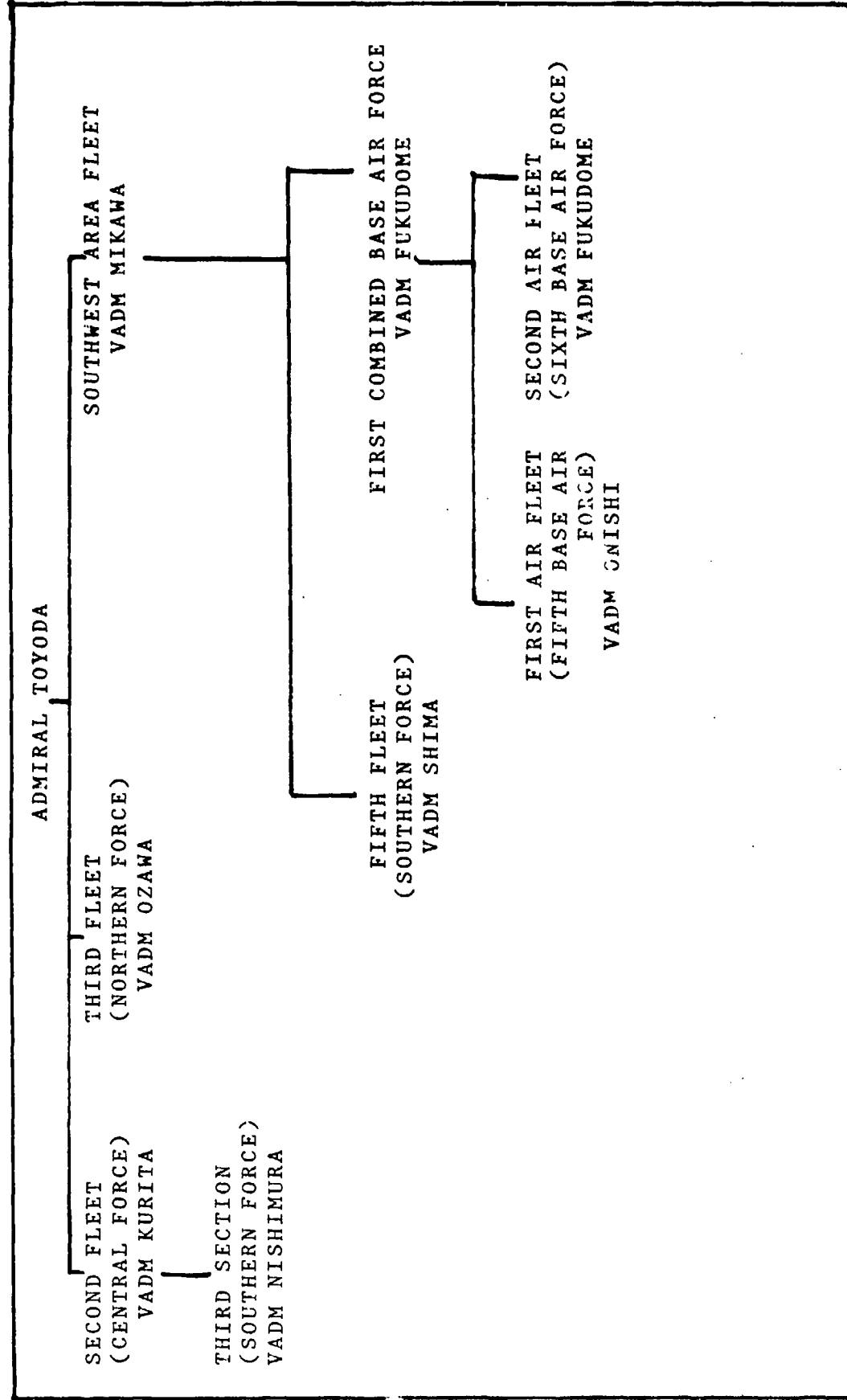


Figure 7. Japanese Combined Fleet as of October 25, 1944 (6:11)